



MRC In Focus

Volunteers Building Strong, Healthy, and Prepared Communities

www.medicalreservecorps.gov

More Than 1,600 Volunteer Hours Provided in Waldo Canyon Fire Response

The Waldo Canyon Fire started 4 miles northwest of Colorado Springs on June 23, 2012. Identified as the most devastating fire in Colorado history, it destroyed 346 homes and displaced 32,000 residents. The MRC of El Paso County (MRCEPC), Colorado, was called to respond due to the unit's established integration into the emergency management plans of the City of Colorado Springs and El Paso County.

"Volunteers wanted to make a difference, and they left each shift knowing they did just that."

Fortunately, the MRCEPC had recently prepared for this type of event the previous year with an exercise series called "Up in Smoke." These preparations allowed MRCEPC to work out the kinks of responding to a major wildfire before it happened. MRCEPC was able to implement a process within hours of the wildfire starting because it had exercised this exact scenario with other organizations. As a result, when MRCEPC received the call to activate, volunteers were in place within 45 minutes.

MRCEPC partnered with the City of Colorado Springs Office of Emergency Management (OEM), El Paso County OEM, El Paso County Public Health, and the Pikes Peak American Red Cross, supporting these partners across all areas. MRCEPC volunteers provided support for town hall meetings, re-entry into the impact area, and FEMA assessments of the impact area. They

also provided medical and behavioral health support at four mass care shelters. "Volunteers wanted to make a difference, and they left each shift knowing they did just that," said unit leader Frankie Gales.

There is no fast fix for a disaster as large as the Waldo Canyon Fire, and community recovery continues long after the fire is extinguished. The MRCEPC is still playing a role in recovery through a partnership with AspenPointe, a local private company. Currently, volunteers are providing mental health counseling to help restore peace of mind to those affected by the trauma of the large-scale fire.

The greatest lesson learned was how important preparing for disaster is to a successful response and eventual recovery. As recognized, credentialed, and trained volunteers, those in the MRCEPC were able to make a powerful, personal, and profound impact on the response to the wildfires. *

MRC volunteers coordinating a first-aid station in a shelter.



Volunteers checking in first responders.

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National Notes



Dear MRC Leaders, Volunteers, and Colleagues,

Your efforts to promote preparedness through trainings, exercises, and awareness activities are necessary steps to protect our loved ones and communities before a disaster or other event occurs. For instance, this issue's stories on the Waldo Canyon Fire in

Colorado and West Nile Virus cases in the southwest show the important role that MRC units and volunteers play when they are ready and able to apply their skills and training to a public health or emergency response.

I was recently able to attend several MRC events that commemorated the 9/11 anniversary, recognized National Preparedness Month, and clearly demonstrated the impact that MRC units have in their communities throughout the year. I also witnessed MRC units promoting health and championing prevention efforts to combat obesity and encourage healthy lifestyles. As always, I was humbled to observe the MRC volunteers in action and honored to be able to thank them for their dedication and service. My only regret is that I am not able to get to all of the MRC events to which I am invited.

I also want to thank MRC unit leaders specifically for submitting their activity reports to us through the MRC unit profile system. MRC units reported a record high of 12,465 activities in fiscal year 2012 (October 1, 2011 through September 30, 2012). These efforts show the value of the MRC in your communities, and also

demonstrate the continued viability and credibility of the MRC network to all of our stakeholders. I strongly encourage you to brag about the great works of the MRC to your friends, families, and co-workers...you all have something to be proud of! Please continue to share your activities with us, as they are great resources for information that we highlight on our social media pages, presentations, reports, and newsletters (as you can see in this issue of MRC In Focus).

As our 10th anniversary year comes to a close, I urge you to continue reflecting on the important role that you and your MRC unit have had in your communities, but also look ahead and set goals for the future. It is due to your dedication that we are able to help our nation become healthier, better prepared, and more resilient.

Warmest regards,

//CAPT Rob Tosatto//

CAPT Rob Tosatto

Director

Division of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps



Nolan County Loses More Than a Ton!

Obesity is the leading cause of death and disability in the United States, and more than one-third of adults and 17 percent of children are considered obese. The CDC has undertaken efforts to include obesity in its public health priorities as part of its "Winnable Battles" initiative. The primary obesity-causing factors, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity, are preventable and well-known. In Texas, the Big Country MRC is tackling this battle head on.

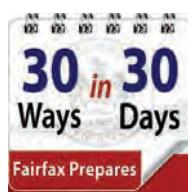
Big Country MRC partnered with the Sweetwater-Nolan County Health Department for Sweetwater's Biggest Winner Contest last spring in an effort to combat obesity, diabetes, and heart disease, and promote healthy activities, good nutrition, and relationships. Organizers

for the contest encouraged participants with a walk-a-thon and a Website that included healthy recipes and other tips.

Residents worked together in 48 teams and collectively lost nearly 2,500 pounds over the course of the 8-week campaign. Individual winner Pete Torres lost a total of 20 percent of his body weight. "Even if I don't win, I'm glad I lost all that extra weight. I've never felt better," said Torres in the fourth week of the contest. Torres' prize, a 1-year membership to the local fitness center, will help him continue his healthy habits. ★

Unique Ways MRC Units Promoted National Preparedness Month

- ★ Montcalm-Ionia MRC (MI) engaged local youth at the Fall Festival with an obstacle course. Kids practiced putting batteries into flashlights, applying band-aid stickers, storing water, and dressing in safety gear such as reflective vests, helmets, and goggles.
- ★ The Hopkins County MRC (KY) released a public service announcement about National Preparedness Month and disaster preparedness that was featured on local radio stations in Kentucky's Hopkins and Muhlenberg counties.
- ★ Fairfax County MRC (VA) advertised National Preparedness Month and their "30 Ways in 30 Days" campaign at five subway stations. On each day in September, the unit posted a new preparedness idea on its blog, provided an activity for participants to accomplish, and asked participants to spread the word of their successes through blog comments, Twitter, and Facebook.
- ★ The North Central Mississippi MRC, along with the Oxford and Lafayette County Emergency Management agencies, joined together to distribute disaster information to individuals as they mingled on the square in anticipation of a local university football game. The unit handed out information packets about disaster preparedness and provided displays of disaster kits for individuals, children, and pets, as well as car kits. Oxford Emergency Management personnel were on hand to program weather radios, and Lafayette Emergency Management personnel were on hand to sign up individuals for Code Red weather warnings.
- ★ Upper Merrimack Valley MRC (MA) recognized National Preparedness Month with an interactive exhibit at two regional fairs. The unit offered blood pressure screenings to 270 visitors.
- ★ Ida County MRC (IA) placed weekly articles in local newspapers during National Preparedness Month. Each article was from a different MRC volunteer's perspective and covered different topics, including making a plan, building a kit, protecting your business, and practicing fire safety.
- ★ Greater Derry MRC (NH) informed citizens all month by posting tweets on Twitter, from tips on how to turn off your utilities during an emergency to disseminating preparedness information in Korean, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Urdu, Vietnamese, Arabic, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Hindi, and Japanese. Those following @GDMRC learned a lot in September!
- ★ New Mexico MRC units toured elementary schools and after-school community programs with the character Simon from The Chipmunks for its "Simon Says Be Prepared!" event. The kid-friendly materials from FEMA's Ready.gov site also got kids engaged in family emergency plans.



North Central Mississippi MRC volunteers at the disaster information tent.



New Mexico MRC Units' "Simon Says Be Prepared" event.

MRC Participates in Cardiovascular Research Study

In August 2012, the Dartmouth Prevention Research Center and its three study communities (Manchester, NH; Keene, NH; and St. Johnsbury, VT) kicked off an exciting community-based participatory research project with support from the Greater Monadnock (NH) and Greater Manchester MRC units. The vision of the project, titled InSHAPE Together, is to improve the cardiovascular health of residents in New Hampshire and Vermont.

The InSHAPE Together project is a group-based approach to improving cardiovascular health through behavior changes influenced by social and community support. The overall goal is to improve individual lifestyle factors for heart health, such as nutrition and physical activity. InSHAPE Together will teach participants strategies for goal setting and testing small changes in behavior. In addition, they will track improvements in activity and food selections, and identify barriers and facilitators to healthy eating and active living. Up to 60 participants from two Manchester-based neighborhoods will be enrolled in the study by the City of Manchester Health Department, and up to 30 participants from a local church will be enrolled in

Keene by Cheshire Medical Center. The study will be conducted through April 2013.

MRC volunteers from Manchester and Keene have been recruited to serve as the project's research assistants and will assist in six assessments throughout the study period. Each MRC volunteer will be assigned to an assessment and will be trained in study protocol to ensure consistency across community sites and neighborhood locations.

The evaluation process will consist of three physical assessments per neighborhood (baseline, mid-point, and final), resulting in a total of six assessments during the project period. These assessments involve a 6-minute walk test for fitness, height and weight measurements to determine body mass index, health surveys and questionnaires, and setting up a personal kinetic activity monitor device for each participant.

Over the course of InSHAPE Together, participants will work in teams to share strategies and motivate and support each other. At the end of the project, the teams will organize a community event that uses knowledge learned in the project to improve resources for healthy eating and active living in their communities. ★

Spotlights

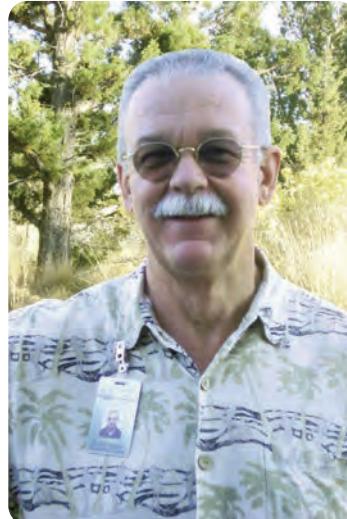
Unit Spotlight

The Deschutes County Public Health Reserve Corps in Bend, Oregon, has supported public health activities that include immunization clinics as well as this September's Project Connect event. Project Connect is a one-day, one-stop event serving individuals who are low-income, homeless, or at risk of homelessness. MRC volunteers provided medical, dental, and vision services to 2,500 people. This event served people from Deschutes, Crook, and Jefferson counties as well as the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. The unit also has been actively involved in trainings and exercises. In May, the Deschutes County Public Health Reserve Corps conducted a Hospital Surge Exercise involving a disaster scenario featuring a catastrophic earthquake on the west side of Oregon that resulted in mass destruction, huge numbers of deaths and injuries, and people evacuating to central and east Oregon. In the exercise, MRC volunteers provided support by serving as scribes and runners in the emergency operations center.

Volunteer Spotlight

Douglas Moore has been a volunteer with the Deschutes County Public Health Reserve Corps for 4 years. He wanted to use his nursing skills to assist public health immunization and preparedness programs as soon as he retired. He joined the MRC just a few short weeks before H1N1 flu struck, contributing tremendous time and talent to the unit's local response to H1N1. He is always ready and available to support public health immunization clinics and has participated in Shots for Tots clinics, preparedness training classes, and recognition events. Doug is selfless in his commitment to helping others and embodies service with the highest level of integrity and humility. Not only does Doug routinely volunteer several hours a month assisting Deschutes County Health Services' childhood immunization clinics,

he also serves with the Family Kitchen (a homeless meal provider), the Child Vision Screening Project, and Youth Challenge. ★



MRC Volunteer Doug Moore

Florida MRC Units Support National Special Security Event

On August 27–30, 2012, the Republican National Convention (RNC) was held in Tampa, Florida, starting with a welcoming party hosted by the City of St. Petersburg on August 26. A total of 121 trained volunteers, representing a combined effort by the Hillsborough, Manatee, Pinellas, and Polk/Hardee counties MRC units, worked more than 1,200 hours to support the event. More than 50,000 people were expected to attend this National Special Security Event, including delegates, protestors, and media representatives from around the world.

Florida's weather was a major concern for all attendees and planners. Average temperatures are in the mid-90s, with high humidity and heat indexes over 110 degrees. Health and medical planners had to consider prevention and treatment of potential heat-related illnesses among visitors and staff.

MRC volunteers, along with public health and community members, staffed medical aid, re-hydration, detainee processing, and first responder check-in/check-out stations. Select MRC volunteers were attached to rapid-response groups dedicated to responding to possible mass casualty incidents.

The approaching Tropical Storm Isaac added to the pre-event planning. Plans were modified to ensure that services were provided in locations that were protected from any weather concerns. In addition, MRC volunteers from one county had to change focus from the RNC to storm concerns, reflecting the flexibility of all involved when conditions change unexpectedly.

Fortunately, protests were peaceful, Tropical Storm Isaac veered away from the Tampa area, and lower than average temperatures helped prevent heat-related illnesses. The MRC provided first aid support to a few first responders, and encouraged protestors to re-hydrate.

One MRC partner summed it up: "The MRC planning, preparation, training, response, and demobilization with the RNC mimicked how they can support their community after a disaster. Post-hurricane issues include overwhelmed emergency rooms and clinics. There are large numbers of heat-related issues due to a lack of power and air conditioning, along with first aid, hydration, and other medical needs. The MRC adds capacity during disasters, and frees hospitals for more urgent concerns. Members who participated in the RNC are now better trained for future events."★



Rehydration Station.



MRC Volunteers helping set up the rehydration station.



Briefing for volunteers working at one of the sites.



Don't forget, MRC is now on Facebook and Twitter! Connect with us today!

The Division of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps is sharing important information on upcoming MRC events, initiatives, activities, and resources on Facebook and Twitter!

<http://www.facebook.com/medicalreservecorps>

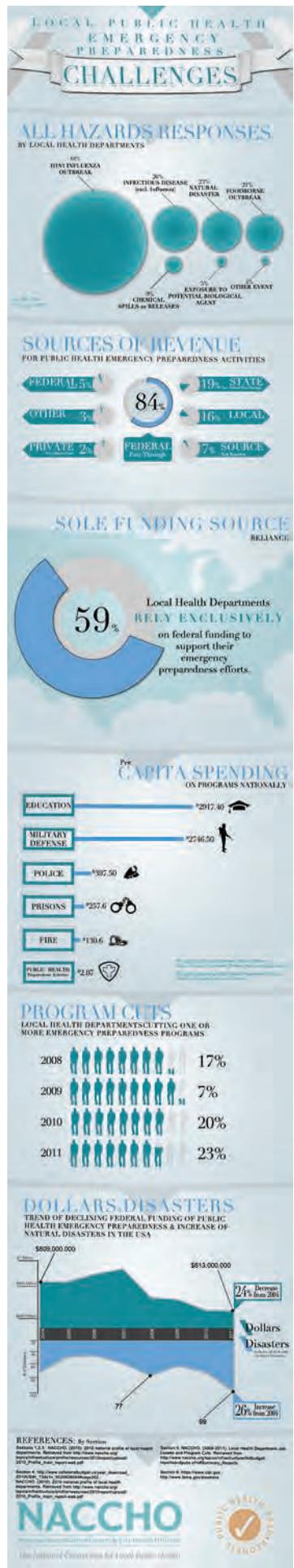
http://www.twitter.com/MRC_OSG

NACCHO Resources

Infographics in Preparedness: A Picture Is Still Worth a Thousand Words

Infographics combine data with design to enable visual learning, helping individuals and organizations concisely communicate messages to their audiences. Infographics also can be easily shared on the Internet and social media because the content is contained in a single image. NACCHO developed an infographic for National Preparedness Month to illustrate the challenges faced by local health departments regarding emergency preparedness funding and resources. Check out the infographic here <http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/NPM/infographics.cfm>. ➤

Remember to share! ★



News from NACCHO

Beat the Heat

Cooling centers and extreme heat alert systems are emerging around the United States as emergency planners recognize the need to mitigate the effects of extreme heat events on local citizens. By the end of the 21st century, scientists predict that North American temperatures will rise by another 4°–11° F, and as a result, heat-related illnesses could more than triple in the United States. As the number of summer heat waves continues to rise, local health departments and emergency planners must take preventive measures to ensure that their communities have resources to stay cool and safe.

The CDC's Extreme Heat Media Toolkit (<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/extremeheat/>) contains media materials, Web tools, and sample outreach messages. In addition, the Minnesota Department of Health provides tools (<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/climatechange/extremeheat.html#toolkit>) to help local governments and public health professionals prepare for extreme heat events, including sample language for a heat response plan that can be adapted to a city or region. With proper planning and coordination, communities nationwide can reduce heat-related deaths. ★

Succession Management in MRC-TRAIN

MRC-TRAIN (www.mrc.train.org) is the optional learning management system available for all MRC units through the Division of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps. Since 2011, units have been provided with organizational accounts—logins that are specific for the unit and not tied to any individual. Unit organizational accounts have full administrative control of the unit, allowing access to a number of tools to track unit preparedness, including posting courses, creating and managing training plans, and generating reports on unit training data.

Importantly, organizational accounts in MRC-TRAIN support succession management. Because account information is not tied to any individual, login details can be included in transition documentation for incoming unit leaders to use. This will allow future unit leaders to not only continue a unit's training and education curriculum, but also review past training, assess volunteer experience and education, and analyze data as needed. It is encouraged that units incorporate the organizational account information for MRC-TRAIN into unit succession management and continuity documentation.

Additional resources and information on MRC-TRAIN training plans are available on the MRC Website (<https://medicalreserv корпус.gov/searchFltr/TRAINResources>) and MRC-TRAIN (<http://www.mrc.train.org>). The MRC-TRAIN Support Desk (mrcsupport@train.org) is available to provide assistance and field questions. Remember, MRC-TRAIN is FREE (including many CEUs), available 24/7, and on track! ★

MRC Units Respond to Summer 2012 West Nile Virus Scare

The United States saw a resurgence of reported West Nile virus infections in summer 2012. In fact, the number of cases in 2012 was the highest reported to the CDC since 2003. West Nile virus first appeared in the United States in New York in 1999, and spread across the country during the next 5 years. As of October 9, 2012, there were a total of 4,249 confirmed cases. Nearly 70 percent of the cases have been reported in eight states, and a third of all cases have been reported in Texas.

MRC volunteers nationwide took part in educating citizens about West Nile virus and how to prevent infection. Because there is no vaccine against West Nile virus, the best method to reduce cases is vector control and personal protective measures against mosquito

bites. In Tarrant County, Texas, a county hard hit with 248 cases and 9 deaths this year, the Tarrant County MRC spent 40 hours distributing educational flyers with tips for limiting risk of exposure to West Nile virus. They also responded to questions about aerial mosquito spraying to those citizens living in target ZIP Codes. The Hughes County MRC (OK) spoke to senior citizens, who are most at risk for serious disease if infected, about personal protection measures to reduce the likelihood of being bitten by infected mosquitoes. Overall, more than 22 MRC units reported conducting activities on West Nile virus prevention this summer, serving more than 60,000 people. The power of the MRC network was in full force, protecting people from this potentially serious illness. ★



Tarrant County MRC volunteers assist with delivery of mosquito repellent.

We want to hear from you!

We need your help to make this newsletter informative, interesting, and beneficial to MRC units nationwide. We are always accepting stories and best practices on the MRC. Remember that stories with photos are more likely to be included. We look forward to your submissions.

For the upcoming newsletter...

We are specifically requesting stories and photos from any major events you participated in during 2012 that commemorated the 10 Year Anniversary of the MRC. Please send your submissions in for consideration by **December 3, 2012** to mrcnewsletter@naccho.org.

Submission Guidelines

- Please include contact information (e-mail and telephone number) for follow-up.
- If you include photos, please send them as **high-resolution** JPEG, TIF, or EPS attachments.
- Digital cameras should be set for high-quality images using the maximum megapixel setting available.
- Photo submissions should also include a caption or description of the event.



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NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials

1100 17th Street, NW, Seventh Floor, Washi , DC 20036

Save the Date

PUBLIC HEALTH PREPAREDNESS SUMMIT 2013

ATLANTA MARCH 12-15

The Public Health Preparedness Summit will be held in Atlanta, GA, from March 12 to 15, 2013. Register today!

For more information, visit:

www.phprep.org



A Look Ahead

December

- National Safety Month
- 1 World AIDS Day
- 2–8 National Handwashing Awareness Week

January

- Cervical Health Awareness Month
- National Blood Donor Month
- National Birth Defects Prevention Month

February

- National Cancer Prevention Month
- American Heart Month