

Spring 2011

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Maui County Health Volunteers Participate in 3-day Exercise

Maui County Health MRC volunteers (MCHV) in Hawaii participated in a mass prophylaxis and mass shelter, and closed-dispensing site exercises during March 15-17, 2011. The exercises provided an opportunity for volunteers to test their knowledge and skills to be ready for a real-life event. Just a few days before these exercises, the islands of Hawaii endured the effects of the tsunami in Japan.

During the mass care exercise, the scenario included a tsunami that resulted in the opening of a mass care shelter. The shelter was open from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at the War Memorial Gymnasium in Wailuku, a facility used as an American Red Cross shelter. Emergency preparedness planner Marc Nishimoto coordinated the planning meetings and completed the logistics to support the exercise.

In a separate exercise, anthrax was found at the local hospital and a request was made from different agencies to provide medical countermeasures. MCHV members were part of the emergency response team that dispensed medical countermeasures at the four sites throughout Maui.

The open dispensing site accepted the general public (actors) on March 15. The dispensing site was managed by a

public health nurse and staffed by MCHV members. All members received job action sheets and Just-in-Time Training.

MCHV members assigned to teams led by public health nurses were sent to the Makena Beach and Golf Resort, Maui police station, and Hale Makua Health Services facility. The Makena Beach and Golf Resort was used to develop dispensing plans for a large resort, which was tested successfully and later applied to the other 12 large resorts in Maui County. The MRC unit shares memorandums of understanding with Hale Makua Health Services and the Maui Police Department.

“Just a few days before these exercises, the islands of Hawaii endured the effects of the tsunami in Japan.”

Nishimoto says, “Overall, the exercise provided training to all agencies and their staff and volunteers. All players and actors became educated in mass prophylaxis and mass dispensing operations. This was the first time that the Maui Humane Society participated in a mass shelter exercise, and changes in their procedures were made during the exercise. Also, the closed dispensing site exercises with partner agencies provided a valuable training opportunity for MCHV members, and the ability to revise plans to provide medical countermeasures to discrete populations in Maui County. The dispensing template developed at the Makena Beach and Golf resort for visitors will be tested at additional major resorts, and will hopefully become the model statewide to take care of visitors.” ★

Volunteers provide medical countermeasures.

Volunteers at the POD exercise.



National Notes



Dear MRC Leaders and Volunteers,

I would like to express my gratitude for all you do to support important public health, preparedness, and response initiatives in your communities. These activities help to build resilience and reduce vulnerabilities. In this issue of *MRC ★ In Focus*, we recognize several units and their volunteers for their

efforts. While noting these accomplishments, I would like to point out that volunteering also provides numerous benefits to the volunteer.

Of course, one benefit is the satisfaction the one gets from helping others. For many individuals, volunteering gives them a sense of purpose and meaning in their lives. It helps to broaden their social networks, and that can have many positive effects. Volunteering provides opportunities for social interactions with fellow volunteers while supporting an important activity in the community. The mother and daughter volunteers highlighted in this edition's Volunteer Spotlight exemplify how families and friends can volunteer together, showing how existing relationships can be strengthened through volunteerism. Interacting with others with a common interest is also a great way to create new relationships.

MRC volunteers have a variety of backgrounds and bring a wide range of skills and knowledge when they join. However, they can also attain new skill sets and professional experience when they participate in trainings, exercises, and local activations for public health or response needs. This can be very important for students or professionals who are just starting out in their careers.

Potential employers are often looking for a well-rounded individual who gives back to their community. MRC volunteer opportunities may also help health professionals who are looking to re-enter a clinical career after a time away (i.e., an administrator or stay home parent who wants to return to clinical practice). Volunteering can help to boost their confidence, polish their skills, and expand their knowledge base.

Volunteering also can have a significant effect on the health of the volunteer. Research presented by the Corporation for National and Community Service shows “a strong relationship between volunteering and

health: those who volunteer have lower mortality rates, greater functional ability, and lower rates of depression later in life than those who do not volunteer.” See *The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research* for more information at <http://www.national.gov/about/volunteering/benefits.asp>.

I recently read a book entitled *Wellbeing* by Tom Rath and Jim Harter in which the authors share the results of a Gallup study of wellbeing and its implications. They found five essential elements of wellbeing: Career, Social, Financial, Physical, and Community. Regarding community wellbeing, the authors say that “This may be what differentiates an exceptional life from a good one. When we asked people with thriving wellbeing about the greatest contribution they had made in their life, with few exceptions, they mentioned the impact they have had on another person, group, or community. Not only had these individuals made a substantial contribution to something bigger than themselves, but they also had been recognized for their community involvement.”

Imagine a community—or a nation—in which everyone volunteered. Everyone would expand their skills and knowledge. Everyone would be healthier. And everyone would have a more meaningful life. This is a future I think we all can work towards. ★

Warmest Regards,

//CAPT Rob Tosatto//

CAPT Rob Tosatto
Director
Office of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps



Spring 2011 MRC Introduction to Federal Deployment Training

The Office of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps (OCVMRC) Deployment Operations staff develops procedures that will be used to deploy willing, able, and approved Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteers outside their local jurisdiction as part of the Federal response to large-scale national emergencies. To achieve this goal, OCVMRC provides introductory Federal deployment training to better prepare MRC volunteers who may deploy. This is a weeklong course dedicated to providing MRC volunteers with an introductory overview of a Federal response for public health and medical disasters.

In March, 29 MRC volunteers from 15 states attended the spring 2011 MRC Introduction to Federal Deployment Training in Washington, DC. The trainees were introduced to the concepts of Emergency Support Function #8, which outlines the steps for overwhelmed states to request Federal assistance during a public health disaster. This class participated in a tour of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary's Operation Center in downtown Washington, DC. While onsite, the volunteers met with RADM Boris Lushniak, the Deputy Surgeon General. RADM Lushniak spoke to the class about the importance of local volunteerism; the adversity that volunteers may face in responding, and his appreciation for their willingness to volunteer to help those outside their local communities.

During the didactic portion of the course, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Mark Keim, M.D., provided an overview of the range of disasters that MRC Federal Deployment volunteers may respond to, if called upon. The course included an exercise integrating the Incident Command System and triage during a simulated mass casualty. All attendees expressed appreciation for the training and exercise and were congratulated for completing the training. ★

*To learn more about OCVMRC
Deployment Operations, please visit:*

<http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/MRCDeployment>



RADM Lushniak (center) with OCVMRC staff and participants.

2011 OCVMRC Recognition Awards Announced

During the 2011 Integrated Medical, Public Health, Preparedness and Response Training Summit in Grapevine, TX, the OCVMRC held the MRC Awards Luncheon to honor those who have helped to support the MRC network, including outstanding MRC volunteers and leaders, housing and partner organizations, and other key stakeholders.

Nominations were received from across the country; after extensive review, a select number of recipients were recognized for their efforts in each category.

Community Resiliency Award

MRC of the West Central Region (MN)

Chicago Familia Latina Unida MRC (IL)

Ambassador Award

Green River District MRC (KY)

Marin MRC (CA)

Outstanding MRC Responder Award

Vickie Carraher, Greene County MRC (OH)

Tony Carbone, Oklahoma Region 1 – Beckham

County MRC (OK)

Susan Vondracek, MRC of Southern Nevada (NV)

Outstanding MRC Public Health Volunteer Award

Terry L. Strain, Northwest Louisiana MRC (LA)

Judy Bencker, Eastern Nebraska/Western Iowa MRC (NE)

Outstanding MRC Housing Organization Award

Yuma County Public Health Services District (AZ)

Rhode Island Disaster Medical Assistance Team (RI)

Outstanding MRC Partner Organization (or Partnership) Award

Florida Bureau of Radiation Control (FL)

Davis County CERT (UT)

Innovator Award

Monmouth County MRC (NJ)

Onslow County MRC (NC)

Palatine MRC (IL)

Mentor Award

Massachusetts Region 4A MRC (MA)

MRC Picture of the Year

Upper Merrimack Valley MRC (MA)

Collin County MRC (TX)



MRC Picture of the Year winners.

MRC Spotlights

VOLUNTEER – Marylou Salois and Dianne Gabriel have been MRC volunteers for nine years. They originally started as volunteers with the Upper Merrimack Valley MRC (MA) and later joined the Greater River Valley MRC (MA) shortly after its creation. They felt that the MRC would be an excellent way to help out in preparation of and during a disaster.

Marylou Salois is a retired licensed practical nurse, and her daughter, Dianne Gabriel, is an executive assistant at a local hospital. As volunteers for the Greater River Valley MRC, Marylou and Dianne support public health needs in a local emergency response by assisting large groups of people on short notice. Both volunteers participated in trainings and response efforts to the pandemic flu. Marylou provided vaccinations at large-scale flu clinics, while Dianne helped with registration and traffic management. Greater River Valley MRC Coordinator David Nichols says, “Mary Lou and Dianne’s compassion and work ethic have proved extremely valuable to the local MRC. Their positive interaction with others, sensitivity to the needs of the community, and willingness to respond are much appreciated.”

ORGANIZATION – The National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) was organized to provide research-based advocacy for health centers and their clients, outreach to the public about the mission and value of health centers, to provide training and technical assistance to health center staff and boards, and to develop partnerships with private partners and key stakeholders to foster the delivery of primary healthcare services to communities in need.

Today, more than 1,200 community, migrant, and homeless health centers with 8,000 service sites exist nationwide and in U.S. territories serving more than 23 million patients. Most community health centers are located in economically depressed inner-city neighborhoods and isolated rural communities, and serve some of the most vulnerable and at-risk patients.

Community health centers and their state-based Primary Care Associations have been working to develop emergency management plans, create community linkages with local and regional disaster planning partners, and secure emergency response equipment and training so that community health centers can effectively respond to a disaster or emergency. Due to their expertise in working with low income and ethnically diverse patients, community health centers are uniquely positioned to work together with local MRC units to provide surge capacity in local or regional emergencies or disasters, and support ongoing public health efforts. ★

For more information about NACHC and community health centers, visit:

<http://www.nachc.org> and <http://bphc.hrsa.gov/about>

Marion County MRC Provides Health Screenings to Schools

For five months, seven volunteers of the Marion County MRC (FL) helped to provide more than 13,000 height, weight, vision, and hearing screenings at 36 local schools in Marion County. The impact of these screenings is monumental and even more importantly, the volunteers helped to remove a huge burden on school health nurses.

Prior to the volunteers’ arrival at the schools, they received Just-in-Time Training and reference handouts, hands-on demonstrations, and the opportunity to see the different equipment that they would be using. In addition, volunteers had to submit a copy of their driver’s license and a volunteer form to the volunteer coordinator for the school board.

To organize the screenings, volunteers successfully used the SERVFL mission request system to manage volunteers for this non-emergency event by using a filtering system to request registered nurses and others with higher medical qualifications.

The Marion County MRC unit plans to continue screenings throughout the remainder of the school year—the unit is housed within the county health department, and the health department has a written procedure for using the MRC in non-disaster events or incidents. ★

MRC coordinator prepares to screen students.



News from NACCHO

Due to the recent nuclear incident in Japan, the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) organized preparedness and environmental-related tools and resources for public health professionals. ★

For more information, visit:

<http://www.naccho.org/topics/radiation/preparedness.cfm>

Stay informed and up-to-date about NACCHO’s latest advocacy efforts to represent local health departments around the country. ★

To view NACCHO’s activities including letters to Congress, endorsements, coalitions, and more, visit:

<http://www.naccho.org/advocacy/action/>

Greater Nashua MRC Participates in Autism Awareness Training

The Greater Nashua MRC (NH) participated in a unique training with Easter Seals New Hampshire, which works with people of all disabilities and special needs and their families to ensure that they are given equal opportunities in their communities. The training, Autism Awareness 9-1-1, was held on February 10, 2011, at the Brookline, New Hampshire Safety Complex. Thirty people attended the training, including MRC volunteers, New Hampshire Disaster Behavioral Health Response Teams, and Community Emergency Response Teams.

The MRC collaborated with Easter Seals New Hampshire because autism is a relatively new subject in the preparedness field, and it is important that individuals in the field understand how to appropriately intervene with someone who has autism during an emergency situation.

During the training, volunteers learned about autism, the various stages of autism, how to act when approaching or talking to an individual with autism during an emergency, and what actions may be necessary when separating an autistic person from his or her normal caregivers.

Unit coordinator Eugene Heighton says, “We had very good cross representation from other area emergency service units as well as Disaster Behavioral Health members.” ★



Volunteers learn about Autism 9-1-1.



Disseminating Training through MRC-TRAIN

MRC-TRAIN enables unit leaders to distribute training opportunities to volunteers through an integrated Web-based network. Two tools are useful in promoting trainings to volunteers: the Course Provider role and the Training Plan Module.

The Course Provider role allows unit leaders and select volunteers to post trainings to MRC-TRAIN. Trainings can be either classroom or Web-based, and can be made available either locally or to a wider audience. Additionally, trainings posted on MRC-TRAIN allow for smoother online registration, roster-tracking, and reporting. Unit leaders can request the Course Provider role through the My Account link located on the right-hand side of the MRC-TRAIN home page.

The Training Plan Module can be tailored to a unit's specific training needs and provides each volunteer with an outlined set of training determined by the unit leader

and the MRC's housing organization. Once assigned, both unit leaders and learners can track individual and unit-level training progress, e-mail volunteers, create reminders, and set due dates for completion. The Training Plan Module can be accessed through the Courses sub-menu under the Administration tab. ★

Additional MRC-TRAIN resources are available at:

MRC Web Site

<http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/TRAINResources>

MRC-TRAIN Web Site

<https://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!

NACCHO Resources

NACCHO's Advanced Practice Centers (APC) Program is a network of local health departments that exist to serve the public health community, developing resources and training on topics including risk communication, workforce development, biosurveillance, countermeasure distribution, and more. ★

To view the APC Web site to access news, tools, and resources, visit:
<http://apc.naccho.org>

To view a list of all available funding opportunities today, visit:
<http://www.naccho.org/topics/funding/>

Erie County MRC Receives Award for Tornado Response

On February 11, at the Partners for Life Conference in Toledo, OH, the Erie County MRC (OH) received the Dr. Frank Foss EMS Excellence Award from the St. Vincent/University of Toledo Medical College/St. Rita's Life Flight and Mobile Life for the unit's outstanding response to a June 2010 tornado event. The award was given "in recognition for going above and beyond the call of duty, providing outstanding community service under extraordinary circumstances."

Last June, the Erie County MRC unit was requested by Ottawa County's Emergency Management Agency (EMA) Director, 18 hours after tornadoes struck the southwestern corner of Ottawa County. Approximately 10 square miles, with an estimated 50 homes, sustained major damage from an F4 tornado on June 5. The Erie County MRC provided more than 800 hours of service to the community, including the coordination of more than 1,300 volunteers.

For nine days, with some volunteers driving between 25 and 50 miles per day, 20 volunteers responded and managed the unsolicited volunteers; coordinated the victims' needs with volunteer resources and public works; received, organized, and distributed unsolicited donations; provided basic first aid when emergency medical services were not available; provided information coordination to responding social, non-governmental, and government agencies; acted as a liaison between on-scene organizations and the EMA; and coordinated the delivery of relief items and assistance from government agencies to the affected residents. ★

Village of New Lenox MRC Assists Two Shelters

With predictions of 12 to 24 inches of accumulated snow, wind chills in the single digits, and wind speeds gusting up to 40 or 50 miles per hour, the Village of New Lenox MRC (IL) established a shelter at the New Lenox Police Department (NLPD) on February 1, 2011, through late morning on February 2. The unit also staffed an American Red Cross (ARC) shelter at a local high school from February 1 to 3. Seven volunteers were prepared to assist at the ARC shelter, but it was remote and inaccessible to the public.

The NLPD shelter had three MRC volunteers tend to the needs of stranded motorists who were brought in by police officers and firefighters. Volunteers also assisted with the check-in and registration areas and provided food, blankets, cots, entertainment, and beverages. In addition, volunteers checked on the general medical condition of the people at the shelter.

The Emergency Services Disaster Agency personnel also assisted with staffing the shelter and worked alongside MRC volunteers. Unit coordinator Dan Martin says, "Based on the performance of the volunteers, they earned the respect of our first responders. I believe our first responders now have a better understanding of the abilities of our MRC volunteers."

The MRC volunteers' contributions to the shelters were well received by both the participating agencies and the 20 stranded motorists who took refuge at the shelter. One person wrote a letter to the editor of one of the local newspapers to compliment the NLPD shelter and its volunteers. In addition, the MRC volunteers and others who provided assistance were thanked by Mayor Tim Baldermann and the Village Trustees for their efforts. They each received wall plaques from the mayor and the Village Board as a token of appreciation. ★



The Office of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps (OCVMRC) is now tweeting important information on hot topics, upcoming events, initiatives, MRC stories, and resources. Twitter's two-way format allows for easy, timely sharing of ideas and discussing hot topics. This free social networking and micro-blogging service is used by many government agencies to help them stay connected to the public.

OCVMRC hopes to utilize Twitter to engage the MRC community and build greater awareness of the MRC with new audiences. Please urge your volunteers, partners, and supporters to follow us on Twitter, so we can strengthen the MRC network and extend the reach of the MRC message.

Follow us on Twitter to join the conversation.

It's FREE, fast, and easy to sign up at www.twitter.com!

www.twitter.com/MRC_OSG

Big Country MRC Assists Elderly Patients

As part of emergency response efforts due to February's widespread fires, the Big Country MRC (TX) participated in two major activities: assisting with patient transport for a nursing home moving to a new facility, and providing assistance at a shelter located 30 miles away.

On February 15, 10 MRC volunteers assisted with transporting 60 nursing home patients via two mini buses with wheelchair lifts. Many volunteers are nurses and already had experience in patient transfer, but the evacuation element was a new learning experience.

The second activity took place on February 28, when the local fire chief asked 12 volunteers to provide assistance at a Colorado City shelter, where many residents were taking refuge due to fires in the community. The nursing home patients were at the shelter for five hours during one day. The MRC unit provided cots and staffing services to the shelter. Volunteers also assisted with patient care, cleaning the facility, answering questions, and providing security. Two MRC physicians worked on patients in respiratory distress who were eventually transferred to a local hospital. Once the nursing home was declared safe from the fires, volunteers helped load patients back on the buses and load equipment for transfer back to the nursing home.

The MRC unit did a great job of providing a timely response and helped to minimize chaos. Within an hour of receiving the call, volunteers had already arrived at the shelter. The impressive MRC response prompted staff from the Kristi Lee Manor Nursing Home to inquire about starting an MRC unit in the county where the shelter is located.

The Big Country MRC received positive coverage in the local news for their response, and the Sweetwater Fire Department's fire chief wrote a letter to the editor commending the MRC unit for their timely and valuable assistance at the shelter. ★

June

Fireworks Safety Month
Men's Health Month
5 National Cancer Survivors Day

July

UV Safety Month
20-22 NACCHO Annual 2011
Conference in Hartford, CT
<http://www.naccho.org/events/nacchoannual2011/>

August

National Immunization Awareness Month
Children's Eye Health and Safety Month
1-7 World Breastfeeding Week



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. As a reminder, stories with photos are more likely to be included. We look forward to your submissions.

For the upcoming newsletter...

We are specifically requesting stories on resiliency and disaster risk reduction, hurricane and flood preparedness, and food/water safety.

Submittal Guidelines

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

