



SPRING 2008

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Healthier MRC Challenge

In early March, RADM Steven K. Galson, Acting Surgeon General, called on all MRC units to join the Healthier MRC Challenge as part of the inaugural 6-week National President's Challenge taking place March 20–May 15. The National President's Challenge is designed to encourage all Americans to participate in some type of physical activity 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. The Healthier MRC Challenge extends this by allowing MRC units to register as groups online and encouraging them to launch and promote local activities.

Southern Nevada

The MRC of Southern Nevada launched their Challenge with a Railroad Tunnel Trail Hike, following an old railroad bed in a desert setting overlooking Lake Mead. Paula Martel, Unit Coordinator, reports "this is the perfect time of year in Nevada for folks to get outside, so we're offering them a jump start by planning events during the National President's Challenge. We're keeping our hikes easy to encourage participation." Several additional hikes were scheduled during the Challenge.

Douglas County (KS)

Douglas County MRC volunteers also began their Challenge with a "Healthy MRC Kick-Off Walk" at the local Lawrence Parks and Recreation walking trail. Although ongoing events are not scheduled,

community members are encouraged to participate in another program currently being held in the area, "Walk Kansas," in which teams of six log their mileage with the goal of walking across Kansas (400 miles).

"As public health leaders in your community, you have the ability to role model a healthy lifestyle and to empower others in your area to make physical activity a part of their everyday lives." – RADM Steven K. Galson, Acting Surgeon General

Kellie Worley, MRC Planner, adds that the unit "will continue to look for opportunities where we can be involved and promote healthy living. Activities such as the Healthier MRC Challenge tie into our mission of educating the community and promoting Healthy People 2010 Initiatives, such as increasing physical activity and obesity prevention."

Southeastern Ohio-Perry County

Incorporating both community members and their pets, the Southeastern Ohio MRC held their "Walk a Hound, Lose a Pound" event as part of their Healthier MRC Challenge launch. The event included a mile-long walk, prizes, information about the MRC unit, and free rabies shots.

Many additional units hosted events during the 6-week Challenge time period, encouraging both MRC volunteers and community members to get involved and increase physical activity in their daily lives. ★

Harriett Alvarado, RN and Jose Lopez, EMT-1 of the Southern Nevada MRC on the Railroad Tunnel Trail Hike.



National Notes



Dear MRC Leaders and Volunteers,

The last few months have been very exciting, and I hope that we are able to build on this momentum to launch us into an amazing summer.

It was especially nice to catch up with and meet new MRC Leaders at the National Leadership and Training Conference and to hear of all

the activities, initiatives, and responses in which your units are participating. With close to 600 attendees and a four-day agenda, there were plenty of networking opportunities, lessons learned and success stories to share, as well as new resources to collect. Each year I wonder how we will be able to top the last, but with your passion and excitement, it happens!

Soon, pictures and presentations from the conference will be available on our Web site (www.medicalreservecorps.gov) for your review and use. Be sure to incorporate some of the new ideas and concepts you learned into your unit's curriculum. Also, the pictures can be utilized to develop promotional items or add to your own unit newsletter. The most important thing, though, is to keep the conversations going. One way to do this is through the two-way listserv, which is seeing tremendous activity. You are the greatest resource for each other. Take advantage!

During his keynote presentation, Acting Surgeon General Steve Galson mentioned the "amazing force for good," that is the Medical Reserve Corps. Please help us to keep him informed of your activities by updating your unit profile regularly. Your stories are being heard, and we love sharing them.

The MRC has proven itself to be a program on the cutting edge. Initially, many people doubted the concept of the Medical Reserve Corps, but the activities you have undertaken and dedication and commitment you have shown, has helped to show the true value of the MRC. Our numbers have grown, the program office has evolved into the Office of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps, and now, our annual conference will also see some changes.

Next year, we are looking forward to partnering with the Public Health Service, NDMS, and ESAR-VHP to host a joint training summit. This will provide us with the opportunity to network, train, and share strategies with other groups that we work with at the community, state, and national level on public health and emergency related activities. While this summit will be larger, we will include MRC-specific sessions and tracks, as well as the Regional Break-Outs. Change can be difficult and scary, but, as you know, we didn't get where we are today by standing still. I look forward to the enthusiasm you will bring to this joint venture and the spirit you will share with the other programs! More information on this 2009 Summit will be coming in the next few months.

Thank you for your participation in the Medical Reserve Corps and the 2008 MRC National Leadership and Training Conference. Your presentations, questions, conversations, and dedication are what made it such a great success. ★

Warmest regards,

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



CAPT Tosatto and MRC Coordinator, Nancy Burns, of Upper Merrimack Valley (MA) MRC talked about upcoming events and initiatives.



MRC Director, Paula Martel, from Las Vegas, Dagayla Burks and Grace Middleton from the MRC program office showed their MRC spirit.



CDR Narayan Nair discussed the developments related to the deployment of MRC volunteers in a disaster.

New Resources

For more information about how the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) can be used for public health and medical emergency response and recovery operations, check out the CDC Support for EMAC Web site at: <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/planning/emac>.

For more information about volunteer recruitment and retention, contact Mark Snyder at msnyder@umn.edu or Gil Clary at gclary@stkate.edu for a copy of their article, “The Social Marketing of Volunteerism: A Functional Approach.” The article

also is featured in the *Handbook of Consumer Psychology* available for purchase at www.Amazon.com.

Ready, Willing, and Able: Assisting People with Disabilities During Disasters is a 2-hour online training course offered for independent study and continuing education through TRAIN. Specific training covers disability etiquette, terminology, communications, and techniques during disasters for assisting people with disabilities. The course number (1010882) and the course name are required for registration.

Instructional video modules, developed by the Public Health Foundation to help MRC leaders use the resources available through the MRC-TRAIN program, are now online at: <http://coscorn.train.org/Courses/10traintipsproject/index.html>.

Free CD-ROM training packages on Public Health Emergency Law and Forensic Epidemiology are now available for order at: <http://www2a.cdc.gov/phlp/phel.asp>. ★

Hawaii Unit Uses Agency Coordination to Prepare for Disaster Situations

The Maui County Health Volunteers MRC unit has been busy training for disaster situations during the past few months. This training is possible in part because of their coordination with other agencies in the immediate area.

A February Incident Command Post training allowed MRC volunteers, and county, state, and federal staff members to be coached by U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Strike Team members and an EPA on-scene coordinator. Volunteers also have been busy attending special needs shelter exercises with the American Red Cross, specifically focusing on assisting the frail and elderly during disaster situations. First aid, CPR, and AED trainings are attended on an ongoing basis.

Marc Nishimoto, Public Health Emergency Preparedness Planner for the Maui District Health Office, hosting organization of the MRC unit, says “drills are important ways to provide training for all volunteers, especially for our members manning the medical support station, as well as those providing medical translation for our non-English speaking evacuees in shelters. The exercises provide education to our members and provide Maui County with additional trained resources.”

The Maui County Health Volunteers MRC also is preparing for the hurricane season by planning to participate in a Hurricane Expo. This well-attended event will allow the unit the opportunity to provide basic medical screenings and preparedness information on various topics, including public health issues in disasters. ★



U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Strike Team members, Maui County public health employees, and MCHV volunteers Linda Mau, Dr. Lorrin Pang, and Mary Santa Maria participated in an Incident Command Post training.



Charlotte Flavin, Kris Aoki, and Dr. Lorrin Pang practiced medical interpretation in a Shelter Exercise.

2008 MRC National Leadership and Training Conference: Prepared Volunteers, Resilient Communities, Strong Nation

Approximately 600 MRC Coordinators and Unit Leaders convened in Portland, Oregon, for the 2008 MRC National Leadership and Training Conference this past April. The conference provided the opportunity for attendees to network and share their local experiences and offered training sessions on leadership, public health, volunteer management, sustainability, emergency response, and more.

Conference attendees Apryl Brown from the Detroit (MI) MRC and Lynn Pesely from the Sacramento (CA) Regional MRC mentioned that “Getting That Grant: Are You Ready” and “Preparing MRC Units for the Behavioral Health Impact of Disaster” were some of the most helpful sessions for their particular units. Other attendees mentioned the “Roundtable Discussion”

sessions, which offered 43 topics to choose from, and “Sustaining a Successful MRC by Building it Into a Non-Profit Organization” were the most interesting.

The 2008 conference was the last sole MRC National Leadership and Training Conference. Future conferences will involve multi-regional meetings and cooperative conferences with similar organizations.

Conference handouts and PowerPoint presentations will be available at: www.medicalreservecorps.gov in the near future.

Many thanks to all attendees and presenters for making this year’s conference a great success! ★



Acting Surgeon General Steve K. Galson, CAPT Robert Tosatto, and MRC Regional Coordinators



Acting Surgeon General Steven K. Galson addressed attendees at the 2008 MRC National Leadership and Training Conference.



CAPT Robert Tosatto, Director of the Office of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps, responded to a question during a concurrent session.



Unit leaders participated in a group exercise during eCDLS training.

Core Competencies Pilot Site Study

As the MRC program has grown and developed, each MRC unit has adopted its own approach to training. Because MRC volunteers have various backgrounds, credentials, capabilities, and professional experience, it is imperative to embrace this diversity when creating training guidelines. As such, the Office of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps (OCVMRC) recognized the need for a comprehensive guideline to a standard set of activities that each MRC volunteer should be able to perform. These guidelines represent a baseline level of knowledge and skills for all MRC volunteers.

In response to this need, the Core Competencies Matrix was developed as a guide for training MRC volunteers. Shortly after its release, a pilot site project was launched. The project participants, eight local MRC units and one state, are currently working to either incorporate or adopt the Core Competencies Matrix as their training plan.

Participating units include: Massachusetts Region 4A, the State of Connecticut, Ohio County (WV), South West Alabama, Miami-Dade (FL), University of Minnesota, Shawnee County (KS), Bear River-Box Elder County (UT), and San Diego (CA).

Kevin Christensen, of the Bear River-Box Elder County MRC, offers advice to units developing or updating their training plans: “The Matrix is easy to use because it’s a ready-made, out-of-the-box program. Coordinators should remember, however, that these are core competencies designed to give the volunteer an overview, not make them an expert.” Christensen also recommends block scheduling of training, as more volunteers complete the program and it is easier to track.

Liisa Jackson, from the Massachusetts Region 4A MRC, adds “I think it has a positive impact on volunteers to know what is expected of them, and the Matrix gives them a clear, concise way to evaluate what training will make them a competent MRC volunteer. We also use skill set ratings to schedule deployments.”

More information about the Core Competencies Matrix is available at: <http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/MRC/CoreCompetencies.cfm>. ★



Bear River (UT) MRC Training



Massachusetts Region 4A volunteers manned a flu clinic.



Miami-Dade (FL) MRC information table

Roaring Ahead: Getting on Track with MRC-TRAIN

MRC-TRAIN provides opportunities for volunteers to participate in online and on-site trainings, many of which offer FREE or low-cost continuing education credits. Unit leaders can register their entire unit at once using the Batch User Upload tool. The MRC-TRAIN system will automatically send each volunteer an e-mail with the details for their account.

More than 9,500 courses are ready and available for use by MRC volunteers interested in beginning or continuing their training. Unit leaders also can develop and post unit-specific courses and resources including orientations, live events, and Web-based trainings. Unit-specific courses can be combined with nationally available courses into training plans and be assigned directly to volunteers.

Unit leaders also can track volunteer training, send e-mails, create customized mailing labels, and run reports on system utilization through the MRC-TRAIN system.

The MRC-TRAIN Support Desk (mrcsupport@train.org) and Web site (<https://www.mrc.train.org>) are available to provide unit leaders with guidance, instructions, and individual assistance in using all aspects of the system. Remember, MRC-TRAIN is FREE, available 24/7, and roaring ahead! ★

Visit www.MRC.TRAIN.org,
a unit's best friend!

“Dixie Crystals” Refinery Explosion

The Imperial “Dixie Crystals” Sugar Company refinery located in Port Wentworth, a small town just outside of Savannah, Georgia, was the site of an explosion in early February. The explosion, which killed 11 employees and injured more than 60 people, is believed to have been caused by sugar dust.

Volunteers from the Coastal South Carolina MRC unit provided assistance at the Family Center Support site in psychological first aid and employee counseling and at a blood drive for injured victims organized by the American Red Cross. The responding volunteers, all full-time employees, were able to reschedule patients and shifts to provide emergency assistance. Nick Davidson, Director of Emergency Preparedness for the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) Region 8, notes that “this shows that full-time employment doesn’t disqualify you or interfere with your ability to respond in an emergency. Employers have been very supportive of our volunteers.”

Several years ago, representatives from Chatham County (GA) and DHEC established a mutual aid agreement to ease the ability for volunteers to respond to emergencies across state lines. Barbara Laurie, Facilitator, Regional Behavioral Health Program, adds that “when the need arises, you don’t have the time to establish relationships, networks, or processes. The relationships developed in the planning process are the ones you depend on in emergencies.”

Patricia Sheehan, Unit Coordinator, notes that “MRC volunteers in South Carolina can register and be credentialed online. This allows us to track ahead of time the skills volunteers have, which results in a quicker, more streamlined response.” ★



Coastal SC MRC volunteers Christy Costanza, Marilyn Earle, Jerry Stewart, and Renee Woodruff responded to the scene.

MRC Spotlights

Volunteer Spotlight

Dr. Kenn Beeman, a retired cardiothoracic surgeon who now works for the Mississippi State Department of Health (DOH), also volunteers for the Lee County MRC and provides primary care at the Good Samaritan Health Clinic. His primary role in the MRC is to promote collaboration among the unit, DOH, and local community. Beeman reports that he is “proud to represent a community that has one of only two MRC units in the state.”

Unit Spotlight

The main focus of the Southwest Utah MRC, which serves a five-county region, is on emergency and family preparedness. The unit participates in flu vaccinations, emergency response training, and volunteer fairs across the area. With many of their volunteers temporarily leaving Utah during the summer, this unit is proud of its ability to retain and recruit volunteers and hopes to develop smaller breakout units.



Southwest Utah MRC volunteers participated in a SPHERE pandemic flu exercise.

Organization Spotlight

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) serves as the voice for volunteer fire, rescue, and emergency medical responders nationwide. Along with providing advocacy efforts, the NVFC also features programs such as Fire Corps, which connects local volunteers with fire and EMS departments to better prepare their communities for emergency response. Other programs include the Heart-Healthy Firefighter and National Junior Firefighter programs. For more information about the NVFC, visit: www.nvfc.org. ★

Reacting to School Violence

Eight professional counselors from the Maine Township (IL) MRC responded to the school shooting incident at Northern Illinois University this past February, where 6 people were killed, and more than 12 were injured. Working alongside campus personnel, the volunteers provided counseling assistance for students on campus. Robert Cohen, Unit Coordinator, says “the sooner individuals can talk through their concerns, anger, and other emotions, the sooner they can get back to some kind of normalcy. Our volunteers were troopers, and while they were a bit surprised by the number of people involved, they were equally amazed at the response of the University in making sure they had everything they needed.”

Six members of the Scioto County (OH) MRC unit were involved in an interagency response to a domestic violence situation at a local elementary school. Scioto County has developed an Active Shooter program designed to shorten response time, where additional training is offered to first responders, rather than only the SWAT team. Angela Hodge, Unit Coordinator, reported “while the MRC unit as a whole was not deployed, our volunteers who responded as part of their paid positions can now bring their experience back to our unit.” ★

Hurricane Preparedness Week

Hurricane Preparedness Week 2008 is May 25 through May 31. Hurricane preparation involves creating disaster plans, community outreach, training, and response efforts before, during, and after landfall. Noted forecasters predict 7 hurricanes in the Atlantic region during this hurricane season, running from June 1-November 30.

The Occupational Safety and Health Association has released a Hurricane Recovery Fact Sheet for voluntary and community-based organizations engaged in disaster response, located at http://www.osha.gov/dts/oohn/disasterrecovery_shchecklist.html. This fact sheet provides safety and health checklists for responders, important not only during hurricane recovery but in all disaster situations.

Hurricane Preparedness Week is a great time to ensure your volunteers and community are prepared for the possibility of a hurricane making landfall in your area, and/or what assistance you would be able to provide to other areas affected by a major storm. ★

We Want to Hear From You!

We need your help to make this newsletter informative, interesting, and beneficial to MRC units nationwide. Share news, ideas, interesting stories, and best practices, or tell us about outstanding volunteers.

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.

E-mail us at: MRCnewsletter@naccho.org

★ ★ ★ A Look Ahead ★ ★ ★

June

Home Safety Month

Fireworks Safety Month

1-3 National Conference on Service and Volunteerism

<http://www.volunteeringandservice.org/index.htm>

8-12 2008 Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists Annual Conference – Public Health Epidemiology: Adapting to a Changing World

8-12 Sun Safety Week

9-15 National Men’s Health Week

27 National HIV Testing Day

July

UV Safety Month

6-25 43rd Graduate Summer Session in Epidemiology

www.sph.umich.edu/epid/GSS

23-25 2nd Annual Public Health Care Congress
<http://www.publichealthcongress.com>

August

National Immunization Awareness Month

Children’s Eye Health and Safety Month

1 National Minority Donor Awareness Day

11-15 Summer Institute for Public Health Practice

<http://www.nwphp.org/si>





MRC ★ In Focus

Volunteers Building Strong, Healthy, and Prepared Communities

www.medicalreservecorps.gov



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 - ★ Core Competencies Pilot Site Study
 - ★ A Look Ahead
- And More...



May is Stroke Prevention Month

Look for information from the Pope/Conway County (AK) MRC unit about their Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke Prevention Challenge! ★



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