



# MRC ★ In Touch

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## Featured Article

### Torrington Area Health District MRC Makes Strides with Help from AmeriCorps Volunteers

During the summer, the Torrington Area Health District MRC (CT) unit received a cohort of nine AmeriCorps volunteers for six weeks. During the first five weeks, the AmeriCorps volunteers provided an assets inventory of all health department, MRC, and city emergency preparedness disaster supplies; implemented a computerized bar-coding system to automate the inventory; and conducted personal preparedness education to vulnerable populations in communities served by the health district. Additionally, the volunteers stripped the outside of a trailer donated by the Torrington Fire Department so the trailer could be re-detailed and ready for a pandemic flu response and provide POD supplies to four clinics, if necessary. The volunteers both stocked the trailer and added the contents of the trailer to the inventory.

The initial inventory was completed manually and the volunteers were then trained on the use and operation of the bar coding system and the personal preparedness curriculum during the second week of their stay. The rest of the four weeks were spent entering the information and labeling the non-consumable assets. The bar code system included disaster supplies stored in the armory in Torrington.

The work of the AmeriCorps volunteers helped with the recent response of the Torrington Area Health District MRC to a shelter located at a senior center, which was opened at 6:30 AM on August 28, to receive citizens who were unable to remain in their homes during Hurricane Irene. Many inventoried supplies were used including cots as well as animal crates used by the Community Emergency Response Team, who took care of animals in another area of the same shelter while the AmeriCorps volunteered with the MRC.

To organize MRC assistance at the shelter, Torrington Area Health District unit coordinator, Kitty Hickcox, reached out to the MRC via e-mail, phone calls, text messages, and the social media platform—Facebook. Eighty-five percent of active MRC volunteers answered the call down within two hours and 80% of respondents said they would staff a shift on the day or following the day of the initial activation request.

Once activated, two volunteers staffed the first shift and provided first responder support to the shelter staff. Nine people arrived at the shelter, including five individuals from an apartment complex, who were displaced after a tree fell through the roof. Cots, pillows, and blankets inventoried by the AmeriCorps were used.

Some of the challenges at the shelter included individuals who did not bring lists of medication, or all of the medications they would need during a full day. One elderly person in particular, did not have enough portable oxygen to allow her to ambulate to the restroom without a refill. Although the stationary O2 unit came to the shelter with this individual, it did not have a long enough lead to walk very

far and if the shelter had remained open longer, this person would have been transferred to another shelter or a hospital.

During three other separate occasions, the AmeriCorps substantially helped out with the MRC and the community by providing personal preparedness education to local vulnerable populations in the area, including a senior center, community center, and local VFW.

The Torrington Area Health District MRC unit coordinator, Kitty Hickcox, says the help of the AmeriCorps volunteers was “a terrific experience for everyone” and the baton was successfully passed to the MRC and health department staff “to ensure the sustainability of the new systems going forward” in regards to the bar code system and electronic inventory system following the departure of the AmeriCorps volunteers in August.

## MRC/NACCHO Connections

### 2010 National Profile Report Is Now Available

Did you know 93% of local health departments (LHDs) use volunteers for emergency preparedness and 59% rely exclusively on federal funding to support emergency preparedness? Do you want to know more about LHDs and their emergency preparedness activities? NACCHO is pleased to announce the availability of the 2010 National Profile of Local Health Departments report, which includes an in-depth section on emergency preparedness.

LHDs and researchers can use this report as a resource to assess and develop programs, prepare proposals and policy recommendations, write independent reports, draw comparisons between LHDs, and illustrate diverse approaches to local public health. For more information on LHD emergency preparedness activities and local public health, visit <http://www.naccho.org/profile> profile to download or order a copy of the report.  
<http://www.naccho.org/profile>

## Announcements

### A Brief History of the Medical Reserve Corps

NACCHO has created the fact sheet, “A Brief History of the Medical Reserve Corps,” which describes how after the life-altering events of 9/11, the volunteer physicians of the Stuyvesant Triage Center, recognized the need for an organized group of medical volunteers who would be trained and prepared to provide supplemental medical and public health support in response to emergency operations in New York City. The group submitted a proposal to the city, requesting that a cadre of trained medical volunteers be established; the proposal was later expanded to suggest a nationwide group of volunteers be developed—a concept that eventually reached President George W. Bush and Congress.  
<http://eweb.naccho.org/prd/?NA409PDF>

### Advanced Practice Center Products Support Medical Reserve Corps Initiatives

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) prepared this fact sheet to introduce Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) units to valuable training resources available through the Advanced Practice Centers (APC) Program. APCs exist to serve the public health community and provide resources ranging from

training products to prepare for and respond to mass casualty incidents, to public education materials to reach vulnerable populations. A partnership among APCs, the MRC, and local health departments (LHDs) can create the tools necessary to leverage resources and assets with the goal of achieving efficient and effective responses, and recovery from a disaster or public health emergency.

<http://eweb.naccho.org/prd/?NA398PDF>

### **Abstract Deadline Extended for the 2012 Integrated Training Summit**

The deadline to submit an abstract for the 2012 Integrated Training Summit has been extended until October 16.

Abstract and poster submissions are being accepted for the 2012 Integrated Medical, Public Health and Response Training Summit. The 2012 Planning Committee is interested in receiving abstract submissions pertaining to Healthcare Systems, Leadership, Public Health, Resource Management & Patient Movement and Response Integration/Operational Medicine.

The Integrated Training Summit will take place May 21-25, 2012 and will be held in Nashville, TN.

<http://www.integratedtrainingsummit.org/>

### **CDC TRAIN Now Available**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced the most recent addition to the CDC Learning Connection (<http://www.cdc.gov/learning>), CDC TRAIN, a component of the nation's most comprehensive public health learning management system (LMS). CDC TRAIN is an affiliate of the Public Health Foundation's (PHF) TrainingFinder Real-time Affiliate Integrated Network (TRAIN). Through partnership with PHF, the CDC Learning Connection provides access to a searchable catalog of more than 22,000 computer-based learning products contributed by CDC and partners.

<http://www.cdc.gov/learning>

### **Register for the 2012 Public Health Preparedness Summit**

The 8th Annual Public Health Preparedness Summit will be held from Tuesday, February 21, 2012 to Friday, February 24, 2012 in Anaheim, CA. The goal of the Summit is to strengthen and enhance the capabilities of public health professionals and other participants to plan and prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters and other public health emergencies. Register today for the early bird rate!

<http://www.phprep.org/2012/register/>

To submit information for either MRC: In Touch or MRC: In Focus, please contact Megan Skupien at [miskupien@naccho.org](mailto:miskupien@naccho.org) or (202)783-1376.



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