



MRC ★ In Touch

In This Issue:

Featured Articles

MRC/NACCHO
Connections

Announcements



May—Global Employee
Health and Fitness
Month

LINKS

MRC

NACCHO

Featured Articles

Tornado Strikes in Middle of Night—Oklahoma MRC Provides Assistance

What happens when there's a tornado in the middle of the night and the sirens don't go off? This happened in the small community of Woodward County, OK, whose 20,000 residents did not hear the tornado warning sirens because lightning and wind disabled the outdoor warning system. The tornado caused six fatalities and 90 injuries and left the community grieving. About 100 homes and businesses were destroyed, and an additional 170 homes in Woodward and nearby Norman sustained moderate to significant damage.

To assist with recovery efforts, the American Red Cross requested the activation of the Oklahoma MRC (OKMRC) volunteers by Terri Salisbury, county health administrator. The OKMRC was deployed for three days; one nurse and one licensed mental health counselor provided assistance with condolence calls to families of the deceased at the Multi-Agency Response Center. These volunteers also helped meet immediate disaster needs with clothing, food, housing, and referrals to other agencies in the community. In addition, the MRC volunteers offered educational support regarding coping skills and provided crisis intervention when needed.

Oklahoma has a statewide database of volunteers; people anywhere in the state can join the OKMRC, even if the closest unit is located hours away. Although there is not an organized MRC unit in Woodward County, MRC volunteers from the local area were used, and Oklahoma state coordinator Debi Wagner's excellent working relationship with the Red Cross State Nurse Liaison Advisor helped to begin the request and approval process for additional MRC volunteers.

According to Wagner, "The ratio of MRC volunteers to citizens is low (in Woodward County), about 1:1,500 versus 1:500 in Oklahoma County." However, the need for outside assistance was minimal "because the town of Woodward did an excellent job of taking care of their citizens. Even though many people were disappointed that they couldn't deploy, the fact is, they weren't really needed. Even the MRC volunteers that we did use were

only needed for a few days.”

The OKMRC received praise from the Red Cross, who were impressed and grateful for the OKMRC volunteers. Wagner says of the deployed volunteers, “It’s a testament to their dedication that even though they haven’t had a tremendous amount of MRC activity in the past, when they were called, they didn’t hesitate. They reported as requested and worked capably and professionally with the Red Cross personnel. We have had some preliminary meetings in the area and are in the process of building the unit there, and if these ladies are representative of the type of people who live there, it will be one of our strongest units yet!”

Fort Bend Texas MRC Supports the Special Olympics

Twenty-five Fort Bend (TX) MRC volunteers supported 350 Special Olympic participants with a mobile medical unit (MMU) to offer heat and air conditioning for participants, as well as medical shelter, first aid, and hydration. The MMU can be configured to fit 32 beds with electricity and climate control, and is set up by the Mobile Unit Setup Team (MUST), a group of 25 medical and non-medical volunteers who are part of the Fort Bend MRC.

MUST volunteers work with the county’s Health and Human Services partners to create training and deployment programs for the mobile unit, which is delivered by the county and prepared and staffed by the MRC. The MUST unit is able to deploy the mobile unit within approximately one hour after it is delivered by the county. The MMU is unique because it is comprised of three segments that can be put together in different ways or deployed to two locations.

The event was a great opportunity for MRC volunteers to use the Incident Command Structure in the field to talk with the public about the MRC and public health preparedness, but there were challenges that included the coordination of resources such as MUST volunteers and trailers with the school facility managers.

Fort Bend MRC unit coordinator Bill Ray says that their unit has been requested to provide support to many other events in the county and that the MRC unit’s participation in the Special Olympics, “was a great example of how we can get involved in the community and provide services.” Ray says that next year the MRC plans to have even more volunteers present to staff the Special Olympics volunteer positions.

To thank the MRC unit’s MUST volunteers for their support during the Special Olympics, the Fort Bend MRC provided free tickets to the new minor league baseball game opening their new stadium later that day. Ray says, “We have great MRC volunteers. They took time out of a

beautiful spring day to come out and help others. That is what the MRC is truly about.”

MRC/NACCHO Connections

“Story from the Field” Submission Form

A form is now available on the National Association of County and City Health Officials’ (NACCHO) Web site to capture local health department (LHD) stories from the field and lessons learned during emergency response and recovery efforts. NACCHO encourages LHDs to fill out this form so this information can be used for a variety of outreach strategies including data collection, developing potential newsletter and journal articles, and submitting stories from the field to the media, members of Congress, and other policymakers. Visit

<http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/stories.cfm>.

Announcements

Celebrate Partnerships in May

Partnerships are at the heart of the Medical Reserve Corps’ success in building community resiliency, responding to emergencies and improving public health. The MRC relies on partnerships to share resources and expertise, take part in outreach activities, conduct training, and coordinate response efforts.

Through collaboration with a variety of local organizations and agencies, such as health departments, emergency management agencies, hospitals and clinics, American Red Cross chapters, and other community organizations, MRC units significantly extend their impact in their communities.

This month’s MRC 10th anniversary theme is “The Value of Partnerships,” which coincides with the 2012 Integrated Medical, Public Health, Preparedness and Response Training Summit (ITS) coming up May 21–25 in Nashville, Tennessee. The summit is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and it brings the MRC together with partners from the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS), the Emergency System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals (ESAR-VHP), and the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS).

This forum permits coordination, collaboration, and interaction among the leaders and members of these organizations. Attending the summit will enhance the knowledge, skills and abilities of participants, which in turn

will improve their capability to lead and deliver public health and medical care services during disasters of any origin.

The MRC provides its national and local partners with an avenue for sharing resources, conducting joint trainings, providing medical and public health expertise, promoting initiatives, and much more.

For more information about successful MRC partnerships, check out the resources and information on the MRC Web site at

<https://medicalreservecorps.gov/partnerFldr/Partner>.

Please share your examples of successful partnerships, and we'll post your stories on the MRC 10th anniversary webpage. You can send them to MRCcontact@hhs.gov. And together, we will utilize our collective expertise to create a healthier, better prepared, and more resilient nation.

Upcoming APC Webinar about Continuity of Operations

Alison Jaffe-Doty, Response Planning Manager from the Seattle and King County Advanced Practice Center, will be hosting a webinar about continuity of operations, which is the capability to implement strategies to minimize the impact of an emergency or disaster on vital business operations.

Participate in this Advanced Practice Centers webinar to understand how continuity of operations can improve health department functions, the tools needed to support LHDs developing procedures to implement continuity of operation plans, and more.

"Enhancing Local Health Department Resiliency Through Continuity of Operations Planning"

Date: June 12, 2012

Time: Noon–1 PM, EDT

Link: <https://cc.readytalk.com/cc/s/showReg?udc=g4pozxe2xubc>.

Stop by the MRC-NACCHO Booth at ITS

While you are attending the Integrated Training Summit, you are encouraged to stop by the MRC–NACCHO booth to view new opportunity training videos. These videos are currently in the draft phase and are part of a demonstration project. We are actively seeking feedback from MRC representatives and would appreciate your input.

The videos feature the following four topics:

- Basic Proposal Writing;

- Budget Writing Basics;
- Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materials, Leadership, Personnel and Facilities (DOTMLPF): A Management, Capabilities Building and Validation Construct; and
- Grants, Contracts and Cooperative Agreements: The Peer Review Process and Your Role in It.

Please bring your business card if you are interested in receiving copies of the video so we can contact you directly once the videos are finalized.

"Preparedness Brief"

The "Preparedness Brief," NACCHO's bimonthly public health preparedness e-newsletter, features preparedness-related articles, stories from the field, tools and resources, and events relevant to today's public health preparedness professional.

To sign up for this e-newsletter, visit <http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/brief.cfm>.

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



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