



October 2017

www.medicalreservecorps.gov

Featured Article

Historic Disasters Add Perspective to National Preparedness Month - MRC Volunteers Step Up

September was National Preparedness Month and this year the ongoing disasters have served as a reminder of the importance of strengthening community resiliency and the important mission of the Medical Reserve Corps.

This edition of the MRC InTouch focuses on emergency response and recovery resources available for MRC units, sharing stories of MRC units supporting response efforts across the country, and what MRC units can do to continue to build their unit's capabilities. MRC units across the country have been engaged have been heavily engaged in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery efforts for three major hurricanes, unprecedented flooding, wildfires, and the ongoing opioid epidemic. Many MRC volunteers that stepped forward to volunteer were also directly impacted by the disasters, while countless others stood ready to be deployed. Just as important as this call to action, is how MRC units can use these activities as an opportunity to recruit new volunteers, step up engagement with current volunteers, and identify ways to build on current training and response plans.

Recognition of MRC volunteers in media outlets and social media has been high and we encourage unit leaders to share their mission, stories, and events through a variety of media outlets and social media. The [NACCHO MRC Strategic Messaging Guide](#) includes tools to develop your communication plan and help tell your story. The Media section of this newsletter includes links to MRC related news stories with examples of how communities are promoting the MRC and even one community that decided to choose NVOAD as their designated agency and partner with the [MRC](#) to support Hurricane Harvey relief efforts.

Disasters can have a profound impact on communities financially with damages impacting business, homes and infrastructures. The emotional toll can also be heavy, as communities and individuals cope with their losses, the stress of rebuilding, and the time it may take to return to normalcy. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) has a list of resources for helping communities and individuals cope during and after a disaster and how to plan for and address mental health needs before, during, and after a disaster.

Developing [Mission Ready Packages](#) (MRP) is a way that MRC units can build unit capability, prepare for emergencies in their community, and also to potentially identify and develop resources to support their neighbor states. MRC Volunteers can support a variety of response missions and the MRP tool provides a mechanism for providing mutual aid through the EMAC system. To learn more about MRPs watch the eLearning course, [MRC Mission Ready Packages Introduction and Overview](#) or go to [NACCHO's MRC webpage](#) to download the **Mission Ready Packages Resource Guide for MRC Unit Leaders**. The resource guide provides background information on the evolution of MRPs, examples of emergency response activities that MRC units support, developing MRPs to fit local response needs, and examples of MRPs for MRC units. The MRP Resource Guide is available for download and can also be found in NACCHO's Toolbox in the MRC Toolkit.

We know that over 20 MRC units engaged in Hurricane Harvey Response efforts in Texas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma and over 1000 MRC Volunteers were activated through a combination of local public health officials, emergency management requests, or requests coming through EOC's for support. They provided shelter support, veterinary care, staffed call centers, evacuation centers, reception centers, staffing for free clinics, and follow-up care to shelter guests transferred to nursing homes or hotels. In addition, they supported recovery efforts by providing disaster case management services, tetanus vaccines for responders providing debris removal, and assisting with donation management and distribution.

Hurricane Irma response efforts included MRC units from Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, Alabama, South Carolina, and Puerto Rico, with some states on standby. Units were activated to support staging areas, shelters, EOC call center supports, dialysis centers, reception centers, and distribution of supplies. Kathleen Graves, a volunteer from the Okaloosa County MRC was so inspired from her experience supporting a special

needs shelter in Clay County, Florida that she sent a letter to the editor of the Northwest Florida Daily Newspaper. Her letter can be read [here](#).

The impact of Hurricane Maria devastated the healthcare infrastructure of Puerto Rico. To address the medical needs arising following the storm, HHS coordinated with the DoD to transport medical personnel from HHS' National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) and the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps (USPHS), as well as needed medical supplies to the island. The full article published by HHS can be found [here](#).

As responders continue to battle the wildfires in California, stories of MRC activities are starting to emerge. Check out these wildfire response stories of the [California Veterinary MRC](#) and the [Sacramento MRC](#) which were found on the [MRC Facebook](#) page. Continue to share your MRC unit activities on the MRC Facebook page and on your local social media.

First-hand accounts provide unique insights and can serve as lessons learned or inspirational stories to share. Below are some comments from two MRC unit leaders with insight on their response experiences:

Angela Jouett, MRC Unit Leader, Calcasieu Medical Reserve Corps (Louisiana) shared her thoughts after Hurricane Harvey, "The outpouring from our community was humbling. We sheltered our local citizens as well as our neighbors from Texas. The community donated food, clothes and volunteer hours. We have logged over 1500 volunteers in five days. The incredible partnerships that were brought together made the mission of the Calcasieu Medical Reserve Corps run like clockwork!" The volunteers helped support shelters for 6 days, as well as supporting feeding and medical triage for the evacuee's prior to being transported to shelters outside of the community.

Larry Henderson, MRC Unit Leader, Dallas County MRC, TX was proud of the 520 volunteers who responded to the call for help. "We utilized 100-150 of our volunteers to help with credentialing, manning a phone bank, providing runners at the mega shelter, and shelter set up. We also provided medical and behavioral health staff to one of the smaller shelters and help staff the medical portion of the Mega Shelter in Dallas. Out of the six shelters across the city, we helped provide staff for four shelters."

As we reflect back on the tremendous response efforts of these past couple of months, we encourage MRC unit leaders to share your resources and lessons learned with the network through the listserv. Our strength is in the diversity of the network and the communities we support. The MRC Listserv provides a portal to share your successes, lessons learned, and resources and provides us with visibility across the network.

MRC/NACCHO Connection

NACCHO Exchange: Summer 2017 Medical Reserve Corps edition

The [summer 2017 issue of NACCHO Exchange](#) discusses how Medical Reserve Corps units across the nation are augmenting the capacity of local health departments to improve the health and strengthen the preparedness and resiliency of their communities. It contains the following articles:

- The Medical Reserve Corps – An Interview with Leaders Captain Rob Tosatto and Commander Skip Payne
- Assessing Climate Change and Health in New Orleans
- The MRC's Role in Promoting Community Health and Preventing Chronic Disease
- Strengthening the Public Health Response Infrastructure by Empowering Community Partners and Volunteers
- Until Help Arrives: The MRC's Role in Building Community Resiliency

The newsletter is available free of charge through NACCHO publications. To download a PDF, you will need to register for a free account to obtain a log-in. You'll then log in, add the PDF to your shopping cart, and complete the ordering process. After you have placed your order for the PDF, you will be able to access it in your "My Transactions" and download it as many times as you'd like.

NACCHO MRC Strategic Messaging Guide

The past couple of months have been an example of the strength of MRC units and their willingness to support their communities with hurricane response and recovery efforts. News stories and social media are a powerful tool to share stories and provide an opportunity to recognize and promote the MRC. In addition, MRC units have received an influx of interest from community members wondering how they can volunteer and help support their community in times of need. Now is the perfect time to evaluate your MRC unit's strategic messaging plan or develop a plan if you don't have one.

The [NACCHO MRC Strategic Messaging Guide](#) provides a roadmap for MRC units as they conduct community outreach, media interviews, and develop targeted messages to help you tell your story about the importance and significance of the MRC.

Mission Ready Packages - Resources Available for MRC Units

Developing [Mission Ready Packages](#) (MRP) is a way that MRC units can build unit capability, prepare for emergencies in their community, and also potentially identify and develop resources to support their neighbor states. MRC Volunteers can support a variety of response missions and the MRP tool provides a mechanism for providing mutual aid through the EMAC system.

To learn more about MRPs watch the eLearning [MRC Mission Ready Packages Introduction and Overview](#) or go to [NACCHO's MRC webpage](#) to download the ***Mission Ready Packages Resource Guide for MRC Unit Leaders***. The resource guide provides background information on the evolution of MRPs, examples of emergency response activities that MRC units support, developing MRPs to fit local response needs, and examples of MRPs for MRC units. The MRP Resource Guide is available for download and can also be found in NACCHO's Toolbox in the MRC Toolkit.

Coming Soon: The 2017 Network Profile of the MRC

Did you know that almost half (47%) of MRC units report using ESAR-VHP as a method for exchanging information with volunteers during an emergency? Find out what other methods units report using and other fascinating statistics about the MRC network through the 2017 Network Profile of the Medical Reserve Corps.

The Network Profile report will be released this fall. To ensure you receive your printed copy of the report, verify your contact information on the MRC Program's website. Please be sure that the mailing address in your unit profile is up to date.

Check out the [2015 Network Profile](#) in the meantime. Stay tuned to the MRC listserv for more information about the release of the new report.

Announcements

The New MRC TRAIN Platform: Access Via Your Mobile Device

In May, MRC TRAIN's new platform went live, along with a new address: www.train.org/mrc/. The new interface is designed with mobile devices – smartphones, tablets – in mind. Volunteers can now more easily access the full suite of features on MRC TRAIN as well as any mobile-ready training using the devices on hand in the classroom or in the field.

Units can now more readily prepare just-in-time training, identify appropriate training, and build training plans geared toward specific response conditions. Trainings on Psychological First Aid (17 trainings on MRC TRAIN), Special Needs (4 trainings on MRC TRAIN), and Personal Protective Equipment (18 trainings on MRC TRAIN) can be quickly accessed and reviewed by MRC volunteers.

For support with the new MRC TRAIN site, contact the MRC TRAIN Support Desk at mrcsupport@train.org.

ASPR TRACIE Publishes "Volunteer Management" Topic Collection

ASPR TRACIE recently published a "Volunteer Management" Topic Collection, which provides a wealth of resources for volunteer management to support large-scale disasters, extended health emergencies, as well as day-to-day management of a public health/healthcare volunteer program. The Topic Collection can be found online at <https://asprtracie.hhs.gov/technical-resources/74/volunteer-management/60>.

A special thank you to MRC unit leaders and partners who helped contribute and provide feedback to the collection and its available resources.

Now Accepting Abstracts for the 2018 Preparedness Summit

NACCHO, in coordination with the Preparedness Summit Planning Committee, invites your agency to contribute to the advancement of U.S. national health security by submitting an abstract for the 2018 Preparedness Summit (April 17-20, 2018 in Atlanta, GA). Now more than ever, the public health preparedness community must come together and exchange ideas to strengthen the nation's resilience in the face of threats like the Zika virus, terrorism, and severe weather. Application deadline is extended to October 29, 2017.

[Click here](#) to join the distinguished list of presenters at the country's premier conference for public health preparedness, convening nearly 2,000 attendees representing national and international organizations at the local, state, and federal level. The year's theme will explore "Strengthening National Health Security: Mastering Ordinary Responses, Building Resilience for Extraordinary Events," focusing on the following topics:

- Lessons learned from response to community-level responses;
- Emerging issues that are impacting public health preparedness; and
- Opportunities we have today to drive action toward meeting our future needs.

Visit the Preparedness Summit website to start an abstract, and sign up for the Preparedness Summit e-newsletter for the latest conference details. On behalf of the entire Preparedness Summit Planning Committee, we hope to see you next April in Atlanta for the 2018 Preparedness Summit!

NACCHO's Model Practices - Applications Now Being Accepted

[NACCHO's Model Practices Program](#) nationally honors and recognizes outstanding local public health practice and shares the outstanding practices through the [Model Practices Database](#). By submitting a practice, LHDs contribute to the overall improvement of public health through effective evidence-based practice methods.

NACCHO strives to recognize the best local public health practices in the country. This is why we created the Model Practices Awards. All Model Practices winners will be recognized at the [NACCHO Annual 2018](#) Grand Awards Ceremony. If your local health department would like to apply for a Model Practice Award, or if you want to learn more about NACCHO's past Model Practice Awardees, you've come to the right place! You can find a full listing of past Model Practice Awardees in our Model Practices Database.

Questions? If you have any questions concerning the Model Practices program please e-mail practices@naccho.org and a member of NACCHO's Model Practices team will get back with you.

Release of Refreshed NIMS Doctrine

FEMA released the refreshed National Incident Management System (NIMS) doctrine on October 17, 2017. NIMS provides a common, nationwide approach to enable the whole community to work together to manage all threats and hazards. NIMS applies to all incidents, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity. In April and May 2016, FEMA held a 30-day National Engagement Period, in which stakeholders submitted nearly 3,000 comments and provided feedback on the draft NIMS update, ensuring that it reflects the collective expertise and experience of the whole community.

- Download the refreshed NIMS here: www.fema.gov/nims-doctrine-supporting-guides-tools
- More information here: <https://www.fema.gov/national-incident-management-system>

FEMA will host a series of 60-minute webinars with stakeholders to discuss the updates in the refreshed NIMS and answer questions related to NIMS. All webinars are open to the whole community. For webinar dates, times, and registration information, please go here: <https://www.fema.gov/latest-news-updates>. The refreshed NIMS retains key concepts and principles from the 2004 and 2008 versions, while incorporating lessons learned from exercises and real-world incidents, best practices, and changes in national policy.



The mission of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) is to be a leader, partner, catalyst, and voice with local health departments.

1201 Eye Street, NW, 4th Floor Washington, DC 20005
P 202-783-5550 F 202-783-1583

© National Association of County and City Health Officials

Please contact Alyson Jordan, NACCHO's MRC Communications Specialist, with any questions or suggestions for the newsletter at 202-783-5528 or at ajordan@naccho.org.