



# MRC In Touch

Volunteers Building Strong, Healthy, and Prepared Communities

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December 19, 2018

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## Featured Article

### Building All-Hazards Preparedness Capabilities to Strengthen Community Resilience

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As the year ends and holidays approach, MRC units might consider preparing for a number of [holiday safety concerns](#). Examples include extreme weather events, winter storms, and fire safety. MRC units can take a holistic approach to prepare for the unknown by reviewing and updating their all-hazards preparedness plans. For your reference, we have listed resources below to support different phases of all-hazards preparedness including local, state, and federal examples of plans, templates, assessments, and checklists, among others.

#### 1) Assessing Risk

An "All-Hazards" approach does not necessarily mean planning for all disasters, but for a variety of potential disasters. MRC units can identify the most likely hazards for their community by conducting risk assessments, like CDC's Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response ([CASPER](#)) or FEMA's Threat and Hazard and Risk Assessment ([THIRA](#)) methods. Additionally, ASPR TRACIE has a [Hazard Vulnerability/Risk Assessment Topic Collection](#) of tools and resources to help you identify local hazards.

#### 2) Developing Plans

All-hazards planning can vary widely depending on local community leads. Below are a few great resources for all-hazards planning:

- [ASPR TRACIE All-Hazards Planning Resources](#): This technical assistance request includes an extensive list of resources including three categories of plans, tools, and templates; standards and regulations; and, natural disaster planning.
- [CDC All-Hazards Preparedness Guide](#): This guide uses a three-step approach that encourages developing an all-hazards kit, making a plan (including communications), and maintaining up-to-date information on a full roster of natural and man-made disasters.

#### 3) Training and Exercising MRC Volunteers

MRC units regularly engage their volunteers through innovative trainings and exercises for all-hazards planning. Upper Merrimack Valley MRC in Westform, Massachusetts, created a program entitled “Grooming MRC Leaders for All-Hazards Response” through the 2017 Challenge Awards to recruit, train, and certify MRC volunteers to lead essential functions for a variety of disaster responses. The unit prepared well over 30 volunteers to be part of a “mission ready team” by cross-training them across seven basic capabilities identified from community needs including mass vaccinations (emergency dispensing sites), shelter operations, and severe weather events. The unit recommends the following for cross-training volunteers:

- Train as *many members* as possible
- With as *many diverse skills* as possible,
- Offering as *many response options* as possible, and
- Keep them as *engaged* in activities as possible.

While trainings can be expensive and time-consuming to execute, Upper Merrimack Valley MRC recommends that MRC units explore free training options first via online resources or partner agencies, especially for trainings regarding core competencies, leadership skills, and psychological first aid. Partner or MRC host agencies, such as public health departments, fire departments, and other local private and non-profit organizations may also be willing to lend their expertise as trainers or work space to host events.

The unit's mission ready team has engaged in 3 recent responses including standing-by for a Hurricane Irma Emergency Medical Assistance Compact (EMAC) request, 7 overnight and warming shelters for Winter Storm Quinn, and 17 flu clinics.

#### 4) Engaging the Community

Community members can also help support preparedness planning efforts by learning basic life-saving skills to fill gaps in medical emergency responses. Through a 2017 Challenge Award, New York's Rensselaer County MRC developed a "BYSTANDERS NO MORE!" program that builds and sustains community resilience by offering a day-long symposium in the county for both MRC members and the community at-large.

The symposium teaches a laundry list of valuable skills including cardiac arrest, gunshot wounds, respiratory distress, hemorrhage control, opioid overdoses, diabetic emergencies, motor vehicle accident injuries, heat and cold exposures, seizures, burns, and allergic reactions. The unit shared that, especially in rural areas with varying EMS response times, the best approach could be to equip the community to act until professional emergency personnel arrive. Additionally, the unit provided volunteers with personal preparedness kits stocked with personal emergency supplies: pocket mask, tourniquet, 5-in-1 rescue tool, light sticks, 4x4 gauze dressings and several pairs of nitrile gloves. Overall, these measures helped the unit increase the number of volunteers and community members with critical skill sets to support local response needs.

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## MRC/NACCHO Connection

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### MRC Resource of the Month

#### NACCHO Strategic Messaging Guide

The [NACCHO Strategic Messaging Guide](#) provides a road map for MRC units as they conduct community outreach and media interviews. Review the guide to get an overview of the history of the MRC and learn some facts and figures behind this organization.

### How Do I Include My Unit's Training on MRC TRAIN?

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MRC TRAIN allows units to post in person training, including any exercises, alongside content available from national providers such as NACCHO, CDC, and ASPR. By posting training, a unit could track volunteers who sign up for and attend in person meetings or trainings, including (in the case of exercises) the roles they play.

To see if you already have MRC unit admin account access, login to MRC TRAIN (<http://www.train.org/mrc/>) and select the Admin tab at the top. On the Content tile, you should see an option to “Add Content,” which will open the Course Wizard for you. No Admin tab or no “Add Content” option? No problem! Simply email the MRC TRAIN Support Desk to obtain access on behalf of your unit: [mrctsupport@train.org](mailto:mrctsupport@train.org).

MRC TRAIN will save your unit's training data as long as you need it and without any costs. So, if your unit needs to review volunteers trained or training offered over a grant period, that data will be available through MRC TRAIN's reporting interface.

Remember, MRC TRAIN is here to work for you! Contact the MRC TRAIN Support Desk at [mrcsupport@train.org](mailto:mrcsupport@train.org) for additional support.

## Announcements

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### Reminder: Stay Up-to-date and Subscribe to MRC Listservs

The MRC program offers two newsletters available through subscribing to MRC listservs. Receive the latest information on upcoming events, new resources, changes to the web site and major announcements when you sign up to join the one-way listserv.

Subscribe to join the two-way listserv to engage with peers. This conversational platform allows you to share ideas, resources, best practices, and lessons learned with the MRC program, other units, and other involved participants.

[Click here](#) to sign up.

### ASPR TRACIE: The Exchange Newsletter Vol. 1 Issue 6

Volume 1 Issue 6 of ASPR TRACIE's [The Exchange](#) is now available. This issue focuses on evaluating healthcare facilities including stories of healthcare coalitions, emergency managers, and local practitioners involved in healthcare facility evacuation due to two types of recent disasters: wildfires and hurricane-related flooding. Articles include the following:

- The Last Stand: Evacuating a Hospital in the Middle of a Wildfire
- Evacuating, Treating, and Tracking People on Dialysis: Lessons Learned from the 2017 Hurricane Season
- How the Private Sector Helps Dialysis Patients and Clinics Prepare for and Respond to Disasters
- When Hospitals Become Islands: One Facility's Evacuation Story
- Evacuating a Region: How a Health Care Coalition Helped Evacuate 1,504 Patients from 45 Facilities after Hurricane Harvey





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.

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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](mailto:ajordan@naccho.org).