

Partner Opportunities Bulletin Medical Reserve Corps and American Red Cross

Background

Disaster Services is pleased to announce that a Joint Memorandum was signed on April 2, 2009 with the Office of the Civilian Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) outlining ways for our volunteers to work together and encouraging chapters and their local MRC units to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The creation of an American Red Cross/ Medical Reserve Corps MOU template builds upon the very successful working relationship formed through joint responses to hurricanes and other recent events and highlights the value of this growing partnership. The missions of the Red Cross and the Medical Reserve Corps are complementary and working together will only better prepare and protect our communities to recover from disaster.

Organization Information

The MRC is a national network of local groups of volunteers committed to improving the health, safety and resiliency of their communities. MRC volunteers include medical and public health professionals, as well as others interested in strengthening the public health infrastructure and improving the preparedness and response capabilities of their local jurisdiction. The MRC Program was founded in 2002 and is housed in the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office of the U.S. Surgeon General. There are currently over 800 MRC units and more than 175,000 MRC members who may support a number of existing local programs and agencies.

The American Red Cross is a humanitarian organization led by volunteers and guided by its Congressional Charter and the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Movement. The American Red Cross provides relief to victims of disasters and helps people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies. Each year, hundreds of thousands of Red Cross volunteers respond to more than 70,000 disasters through over 700 locally supported chapters.

Methods of Collaboration

1. MRC Volunteers working as Red Cross Volunteers

When MRC volunteers are going to work as Red Cross volunteers, they will be processed through Red Cross volunteer intake systems, which include criminal background checks. As Red Cross volunteers, they must adhere to Red Cross protocols and activity guidance, display Red Cross identification, and work under Red Cross supervision. Local MRC units and chapters should work together to process MRC volunteers through the Red Cross volunteer intake system in advance of any disaster.

2. MRC Volunteers working alongside Red Cross Volunteers (i.e. shelters, emergency aid stations, etc...)

When MRC volunteers are working as MRC volunteers in a facility where the Red Cross is also working, the MRC volunteers should identify themselves as such (and not as Red Cross volunteers). In this situation, MRC volunteers will work under MRC or public health agency protocols and supervision.

3. Red Cross Volunteers working as MRC Volunteers

When Red Cross volunteers are going to work as MRC volunteers, they will be processed through MRC volunteer intake systems. As MRC volunteers, they must adhere to MRC protocols and activity guidance, display MRC identification (and no Red Cross identification), and work under MRC supervision. Local MRC units and Red Cross chapters should work together to process Red Cross volunteers through MRC volunteer intake systems in advance of any disaster.

Please refer to Joint Memorandum for scalable situations for collaboration.

Recommendations

In order for the relationships to function smoothly and effectively in emergencies, it is important that local Red Cross chapters, public health departments and MRC units begin to develop functional relationships now. Some local Red Cross chapters and MRC units have already begun this process and are increasingly collaborating in many communities across the country.

We strongly encourage local Red Cross chapters and MRC unit leaders to join together now to improve the health and safety of their local communities. To this end, we encourage them to enter into Memorandum of Understanding, using the American Red Cross/ Medical Reserve Corps MOU template, to document their collaboration.

Additional Information

- Medical Reserve Corps

Website: <http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov>

Local Unit Locator: <http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/FindMRC.asp>

- American Red Cross Disaster Services

Disaster Health Services – April Wood, wooda@usa.redcross.org

Disaster Mental Health – Rob Yin, yinr@usa.redcross.org

Mass Care – Lynn Crabb, crabbl@usa.redcross.org

To find your local Red Cross chapter: go to www.redcross.org– Your Local Red Cross