

MINNESOTA

Highlights of State Council Activities

Minnesota Citizen Corps is part of the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. The Citizen Corps program worked diligently during 2005 to promote citizen preparedness and community response. The program grew significantly in 2005, with over 2,000 residents participating in 11 Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) units and over 1,000 residents training in 22 Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) programs. Additionally, over 130 people have been certified as CERT Trainers.

Highlights of State Activities

Public Education and Outreach

The partnership between the City of Minneapolis CERT volunteers, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Department of Education officials secured the installation of NOAA All-Hazard radios in 71 Minneapolis Public Schools. By the end of 2005, 56 installations were complete with approximately 15 more scheduled in 2006.

Also in 2005, there was an unprecedented showing among Minnesota Neighborhood Watch and VIPS programs, which sponsored an impressive number of National Night Out celebrations. Minnesota communities took first place in three of the five community award categories for participation. Minneapolis, St. Paul and New Brighton took top honors in their brackets, and Brooklyn Park captured second place in their bracket. Overall, the National Association of Town Watch recognized 25 Minnesota cities, towns and counties for their dynamic National Night Out campaigns.

Training and Exercises

Several Minnesota Citizen Corps units offered or participated in training and exercise programs to learn new skills, practice previously learned concepts and build relationships between volunteer and professional responders, CERT programs in the City of Minneapolis and Ramsey County offered special CERT training programs for the business community. In 2005, the University of Minnesota MRC developed an online training system to teach concepts of organizing and operating large-capacity clinics in times of need.

CERT volunteers from the Eden Prairie Citizen Corps participated in a school crisis exercise with professional responders. Also, CERT members in the Rochester branch organized a large disaster response exercise in a vacant five story apartment complex. These CERT members also worked in partnership with the local Elks Club to develop a Citizen Corps program/CERT response trailer containing CERT equipment.

Volunteer Programs and Support

Several Minnesota Citizen Corps programs developed innovative new partnerships during 2005. CERT programs in Waconia, MN and nearby Minnetrista combined efforts to provide joint training and exercise opportunities, including the planning of a CERT Rodeo. CERT programs from Cass County, North Dakota, and Clay County, Minnesota, are also combining efforts to serve the residents of the Fargo/Moorhead area.

A long-standing relationship between the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) and the Stearns/Benton County Citizen Corps programs continued to grow during 2005. Citizen Corps volunteers in the two counties -- 1/3 of whom are senior citizens -- contributed over 5,000 hours to volunteer disaster preparedness and response efforts.

Collaboration opportunities continue to progress with the state Minneapolis Citizen Corps program. The Minneapolis Citizen Corps program is pursuing a relationship with Target Corporation, which is headquartered in the city. At the state level, overtures have been made to the state chapter of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and to State Adjutant of the American Legion, to discuss opportunities for collaboration.

In the Falcon Heights community, Citizen Corps leadership and volunteers hosted a delegation from Japan for a discussion that included information about the city's intergenerational approach to community volunteerism. Participants were particularly interested in how the community engaged youth and senior citizens as a part of their CERT and Neighborhood Liaison programs.

Support for Hurricane Katrina Response

Minnesota Citizen Corps assisted residents of the Gulf Coast area in 2005, as over 1,700 families evacuated from Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi to Minnesota in the wake of the disaster. Two CERT volunteers from Falcon Heights and six from Ramsey County were dispatched to aid hurricane victims. Six volunteers from Stearns County contributed over 3,000 hours of service to Gulf Coast storm victims and one volunteer from the Waconia CERT program spent seven months on Katrina/Rita deployment. Washington County deployed eight MRC members to assist hurricane victims and the University of Minnesota MRC sent approximately 25 members to assist, in partnership with the Mayo Clinic and the American Refugee Committee. Other MRC volunteers served in the Gulf region in partnership with the American Red Cross.

National Preparedness Month

Minnesota Citizen Corps held National Response Month for Minnesota Citizen Corps members, voluntary agency staff, and volunteers during National Preparedness Month 2005. Due to the arrival of Hurricane Katrina evacuees, state officials were forced to cancel a major Preparedness Month event in Duluth. Minnesota was able to establish a new Ready Minnesota preparedness Web site that has since become a year-round repository of preparedness information for all hazard situations. The Web site address is: www.readyminnesota.org.