

IS YOUR WHOLE FAMILY PREPARED?

The tornado disaster in June, previous flood and heat emergencies, and other crises have shown the need for area residents to be ready for the unexpected. One of the easiest precautions is to have a 72-hour kit on hand, which household members could 'grab-and-go' in a hurry. Families can create their own emergency kits by filling a backpack from home with essentials. They can also purchase a prepared kit and customize it to suit their needs (adding medications, key phone numbers, card games, snacks, and so forth.) Check supplies regularly to ensure they don't expire, rotating items for freshness as needed.

Remember also to take precautions for any pets you may have. Basic supplies would include pet carriers, medical records (including inoculations, with the name and number of the animal's vet), collars and leashes, and a three-day supply of food and water with the appropriate feeding dishes. Consider any unique needs your pet may have, such as medications and familiar toys, snacks, and sanitation gear (pet litter, scoops, and disposable bags). Having a picture of you with your pet could be crucial in case you become separated from the animal. This could help you document ownership and provide ID.

The overall theme is to plan in advance! Talk with family members about evacuation and communication plans. By lining up materials and making arrangements ahead of time, you avoid having to make important choices quickly under frantic circumstances. Preparation increases your ability to care for yourself and loved ones, and enhances your family's resilience. To learn more, visit www.Ready.Gov, www.redcross.org, www.fema.gov/areyouready, and <http://emergency.cdc.gov/>.



UMV MRC
55 Main Street
Westford, MA 01886

**PLEASE OPEN ME ASAP:
EVENTS BEGIN SEPT. 10TH
SIGN UP NOW!**

Civilian Volunteers Building Strong, Healthy, and Prepared Communities!

medical
reserve
corps



**UPPER MERRIMACK VALLEY
MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS**

WWW.UMVMRC.ORG

**PREPAREDNESS MONTH
SEPTEMBER 2011**

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR STAFF

You can see from this newsletter that we've had another great year! We're entering National Preparedness Month with much to look forward to, and countless reasons to be proud of our dedicated volunteers.

There were many 'firsts' since the last newsletter. These activities included the kickoffs of Statewide Microchip Day and the 'Let's Move!' campaign, our debut involvement in Prescription Drug Take-Back Day, and our response to a tornado disaster of historic proportions. We continue to tie our unit's efforts into larger initiatives throughout the year, especially the health priorities of the U.S. Surgeon General.

Our fourth Training Day was again a great success, and included excellent speakers who provided valuable and new insight into the world of emergency preparedness. We continue to build lasting partnerships and collaborations, which will help us to strengthen our response capacity within the region.

We have seen first-hand how many volunteers are needed in an emergency. Recent deployments remind us that disasters can strike anywhere at any time, including the Upper Merrimack Valley. Thus we invite your help in expanding our recruiting and training efforts in the coming year. We're eager to maximize our capacity to protect area residents during a crisis. As you can see from the photo taken at our Member Appreciation event, we cannot thank you enough for your compassionate service!

Sandy Collins, RN – Director

Nancy Burns, EMT – Coordinator



Ninety of our members joined us to cap off September as National Preparedness Month last year with a special volunteer appreciation event. Thanks for your service!

**THE MISSION OF
THE UMV MRC**

The mission of the Upper Merrimack Valley Medical Reserve Corps is to recruit, train, and deploy members for disaster preparedness in three areas:

- Public health emergencies
- Mass casualty events
- Community service activities

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UMV MRC Web Site:

www.umvmrc.org

MA MRC Web Site:

www.mamedicalreservecorps.org

National MRC Web Site:

www.medicalreservecorps.gov

Communities Served: Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Lowell, Tewksbury, Tyngsboro, and Westford (host agency).

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NOTE FROM THE NATIONAL OFFICE

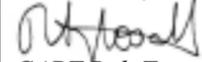
Dear Upper Merrimack Valley MRC Volunteers,

I am always pleased to hear of the significant achievements and frequent activities of the Upper Merrimack Valley Medical Reserve Corps (UMVMRC). Your Director, Sandy Collins, and Coordinator, Nancy Burns, keep me and other members of the Office of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps (OCVMRC) staff well informed.

Earlier this year, we were proud to recognize your unit with one of our "Picture of the Year" Awards at the 2011 Integrated Training Summit in Grapevine, Texas. This award is but a small reflection of all the good you do within your community. Many of you have participated in activities to reduce childhood obesity as part of the First Lady's "Let's Move!" campaign. Others have supported flu clinics and numerous health fairs. You continue to offer 72-hour disaster kits, and always work hard to ensure your community members are prepared for any kind of an event. It is also important for MRC members to be prepared. This was especially evident following the June tornadoes. Ten UMVMRC members deployed to Western Massachusetts to assist at the Springfield shelters, giving freely of their time and expertise.

Please know that I often share your stories with our national partners and stakeholders, including the leadership of the Department of Health and Human Services. Your efforts are appreciated and valued.

Warmest regards,



CAPT Rob Tosatto
Director, Medical Reserve Corps

UMV MRC SHARES BEST PRACTICES

Director Sandy Collins, who helped develop the national MRC pilot course for a New Leader's Workshop, team-taught the seminar again at the Integrated Training Summit in May. Information was provided on how to establish and build a unit, as well as best practices for recruiting and retaining members. Many of the materials shared with MRC leaders from across the country were developed by our own unit!

WELCOME ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS FOR 2011!

There are some new faces on the UMV MRC Advisory Council this year. Say hello to the representatives for your towns when you see them at one of our events:

Billerica	Brian Luttrell, EMT-Paramedic
Chelmsford	Sue Rosa, RN
Dracut	Rich Patterson, Deputy Fire Chief
Lowell	René Allen, Administrator
Tewksbury	Ray Barry, EMT-Basic
Tyngsboro	Linda McCarthy, RN
Westford	Sandy Collins, RN Nancy Burns, EMT-Basic

Many thanks to our outgoing members, who took turns serving on this committee since its inception in 2005: Tom Churchill, Christine Connolly, Carol Devaney, Nanci Dowling-Meehan, Lisa Golden, Ralph McHatton, and Ed Nadolny. Advisory Council members serve as the liaison between our unit and each town's public health preparedness initiatives.

We also appreciate those of you who accepted leadership opportunities in ad hoc capacities: team leaders to oversee our volunteers at health fairs and other activities, speakers at public awareness events, members of short-term committees, and all of you who have stepped up to serve as needed.

UNIT RECEIVES NATIONAL MRC PHOTO AWARD

One of the two units from across the U.S. to receive an award for *MRC Picture of the Year* was our own Upper Merrimack Valley MRC!

The photo at the right shows one of our ten members assisting at one of the four veterinary clinics that supported the first Statewide Microchip Day in our region. Pets who have these ID microchips inserted are far more likely to be returned to their owner if the animal strays, or becomes lost in a disaster.

Deputy Surgeon General Boris D. Lushniak (left) and Captain Rob Tosatto, National MRC Director, present UMV MRC Coordinator and photographer Nancy Burns with an award on behalf of our unit at the Integrated Summit in May.



COMING EVENTS

Please contact the Coordinator at 978-399-2549 or Nburns@WestfordMA.gov to sign up for activities of interest. Also check the web site, www.umvmrc.org, for updates and detailed course descriptions.

Continuing Education – We are proud to offer three special events this season, FREE to members:

Culturally Appropriate Care – Sheila Ochs and Cchan Touch, Metta Health Center.

Sept. 15 (Thurs.): Registration 5:30 p.m., session 6 to 8 p.m., 2 CEUs/2 OEMS hours requested. Site visit for diversity awareness and respecting cultural differences when providing medical care. (Due to space limitations at the clinic, class size is limited to 20.)

Biological and Chemical Agents – Suzanne Bonenfant, RN, Westford Town Hall.

Oct. 4 (Tues.): Registration 6:30 p.m., session 7 to 9 p.m., 2 CEUs/2 OEMS hours requested. Perspectives on use as WMDs, medical countermeasures, and health care roles in emergencies.

Disaster Mental Health – Dr. Hayden Duggan, EMT-I, Westford Town Hall.

Oct. 20 (Thurs.): Registration 6:30 p.m., session 7 to 9 p.m., 2 CEUs/2 OEMS hours requested. Psychological First Aid (PFA), critical incident stress, and managing behavioral issues in a crisis.

AHA Classes – Two-year American Heart Assn. certification, using the new 2010 guidelines. Classes are FREE; students pay \$15 for cost of materials (certification card and workbook). *Sign up early*; maximum class size 18:

Heartsaver CPR/AED (non-medical)

Date: Sept. 14 (Weds.)

Time: 6 to 10 p.m.

Location: Police Training Center in Lowell

Healthcare Providers CPR/AED (medical)

Date: Sept. 19 (Mon.)

Time: 5:30 to 10 p.m.

Location: Millennium School in Westford

First Aid (medical and non-medical)

Date: Sept. 29 (Thurs.)

Time: 6 to 10 p.m.

Location: Chelmsford Town Hall

Hands-only CPR (free demos for the public)

Date: Sept. 24 (Sat.)

Time: 1 to 3 p.m.

Location: JV Fletcher Library in Westford

Health Fairs – All levels of members can staff our display table to discuss the MRC and preparedness issues – including care of pets in a disaster – and offer health screenings. Please let us know if you can fill a three-hour shift on a Saturday at either of these regional festivals:

Dracut Old Home Day

School Complex

Sept. 10, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Yankee Doodle Homecoming

Billerica Center

Sept. 17, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

MRC Drop-In Days – All members and interested friends are welcome to visit our main office and help us pilot a new 'drop-in' format. Stop by to watch our videos, discuss the unit, look through resources and materials, brush up on skills and procedures, pick up your badge or polo shirt, and generally get reacquainted.

Drop-In Days: Sept. 7 (Weds.) and Sept. 13 (Tues.), 4 to 7 p.m.

Location: Millennium School, 23 Depot Street in Westford, 01886

LIABILITY BILL S1155: HOW YOU CAN HELP



MRC leaders across Massachusetts are feeling more encouraged than ever about the progress of a liability bill that would improve the protection of our volunteers. UMV MRC Director Sandy Collins was among five speakers invited to testify on a panel at the Statehouse on June 14, in support of Senate Bill 1155: *An Act Relative to Public Health Volunteer Responders*.

The bill was brought forward by the Coalition of Local Public Health – comprised of the MA Public Health Association, MA Association of Public Health Nurses, MA Association of Health Boards, MA Environmental Association, and MA Health Officers Association. The bill was drafted by the Coalition and brought to Senator Moore, who submitted it to the legislation for consideration. Over 26 legislators signed on as co-sponsors, which was a wonderful first step!

If this bill passes, MRC volunteers who are activated for duty – or otherwise participating in a preparedness program – would be covered to the same extent as if they were employees of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

To read the latest draft of the bill, learn more about groups supporting this legislation, and monitor the status, check our web site: www.umvmrc.org.

You can help to promote the passage of this crucial bill by calling or writing your legislator. (Visit <http://www.malegislature.gov/People/FindMyLegislator> to find contact information for officials in your community.) Just ask them to please support the passage of this important bill. They *do* log all responses; so the more calls that are made by our volunteers, the better the chances that the bill will be passed this year!

UNIT PROMOTES PET PREPAREDNESS



Two volunteers joined the veterinarian at a Westford clinic (right), one of four local sites supported by ten members to ID pets on the first Statewide Microchip Day in MA. 72-hour kits (left) can be made for pets as well as people! See the item on page 8 for ideas.



LET'S HEAR IT FOR HAM RADIO!

Our unit includes a contingent of talented volunteers who provide communications support at parades, drills, and other events. Their continued practice – through response partners such as ARES (Amateur Radio Emergency Service) – keeps them ready to facilitate the flow of information. Their specialized expertise allows messages to be exchanged, even when phone lines are down and power sources are disabled. This capability is crucial in a disaster.



Members who provide communications service arrived to set up a display of radios and other 'tools of the trade' at Westford's town-wide Emergency Preparedness event.

HOT WEATHER DEPLOYMENT

Knowing that the region faced record humidity and triple-digit temperatures mid-summer, your UMV MRC Director connected with her public health counterparts in each of our seven communities, offering our help in case of heat emergencies. On July 22, two members deployed to Cameron Senior Center in Westford to make wellness calls to 60 vulnerable residents. Other volunteers were on standby as needed. One member helped with cooling centers through a separate organization.

Although reliable weather forecasts empowered communities to prepare using existing resources, the MRC remained available to provide surge capacity. Many thanks to EACH of our members for their willingness to stand by in case of disasters, whether or not you are called!



72-HOUR EMERGENCY KITS AVAILABLE

Build your own kit, or buy a pre-assembled \$40 backpack, to customize as you see fit. To learn more or purchase your own kit, call 978-399-2549 or e-mail NBurns@westfordma.gov.



Contents of pre-made kits that are provided at cost.

TORNADO DISASTER RESPONSE – JUNE 2011

June 1 unfolded across the Upper Merrimack Valley as a lovely spring day. But by 5:00, the arrival of roiling black clouds was followed by drenching rains. News reports later revealed that Western MA residents had a mere ten-minute warning before a series of tornadoes ripped through their area from 3:30 to 7 p.m. The violent storms killed three people, injuring 300 in Springfield alone, smashing buildings into rubble.

Hundreds were rushed to emergency shelters because their homes had been destroyed. Power outages were rampant; nearly 50,000 customers lost electricity. President Obama declared Greater Springfield a federal disaster area. Governor Patrick activated 1000 National Guard troops for rescue and recovery efforts. Hampden County experienced its first EF3 (Enhanced Fujita Scale) tornado on record; one of only 8 in state history.

Damage estimates exceeded \$140 million.



One of the many homes in Monson destroyed by the tornadoes that ravaged the area.

John Auerbach, MA Commissioner of Public Health, offered kind words for our responders.

“The MRC did an outstanding job addressing the health needs associated with the impact of the Springfield/Western Massachusetts tornado,” said Commissioner Auerbach. “The dedicated and skilled response of the MRC members once again demonstrated why this is an invaluable team.”

A few days into the recovery effort, local resources became exhausted. Thus the call went out to MRCs and response partners throughout MA for additional help. Your Director and Coordinator toured the shelters where our members were being deployed. Statewide responses are far more complex than activating local members at known facilities within the unit's service area. Therefore, additional levels of planning and oversight were required.



Scenes of devastation remained weeks after tornadoes ripped through Western MA.



Director Sandy Collins inspecting one of the shelters in Western MA being staffed by UMV MRC volunteers.

Ten UMV MRC volunteers cared for residents at shelters in Springfield and West Springfield. Their input was welcomed at a 'dining and debriefing' event in July. UMV MRC staff thanked these dedicated members for their service, and gathered their comments for an After-Action Report. We hope that the lessons shared by all responders will strengthen our local and state response capabilities for any future events.



Some of the ten members who volunteered at shelters in the Springfield area gathered July 25 to 'Dine and Debrief,' providing input for an After-Action Report with our gratitude.

Thanks for serving your community!

Our volunteers served across the region at health fairs, open houses, farmer's markets, and preparedness events.



We held two more Training Days since our last newsletter, offering seven classes at the fourth of these events to date.



Members promoted the national "Lets' Move!" campaign by encouraging families to stay active: push-ups, sit-ups, hula hoops, games, and other ways of making fitness fun.



Training and preparedness events laid the groundwork for service at a tornado disaster, where ten members deployed to shelters in the devastated Springfield area.



Flu clinics were much more relaxed in the season *after* the H1N1 pandemic!



At the Northeast Regional MRC Summit, national program staffer accepts a token from the troops.



UMV MRC pharmacist dispenses advice at 'Prescription Drug Take-Back Day.'



Our unit received another national award: MRC Picture of the Year, presented at the annual Integrated Summit in May 2011.

