EDS Exercise

Our unit played a vital role in supporting the first regional immunization clinic and EDS (Emergency Dispensing Site) exercise in the UMV on January 10, 2007. This event was organized through the collaboration of all seven boards of health, and was planned and operated according to the Incident Command System. This full-scale exercise provided valuable lessons to both local health departments and our MRC.

The EDS drill showed the importance of members understanding ICS concepts, and becoming certified in both ICS and NIMS training. This event also proved a basic concept of large-scale disaster research: only one in four volunteers is available at any given time to respond for service.

We were pleased that our members responded immediately and competently. Their response proved that our call-down system is effective. We provided a public service by helping to inoculate 250 area residents against influenza, tetanus, and pneumonia. This exercise proved that MRCs are becoming an integral part of public health emergency response. We couldn't have done it without you!

UMV MRC
55 Main St.
Westford, MA 01886

3c USA

Please open me NOW!
First event Apr. 14

Helping to Keep our Communities Safe!

Upper Merrimack Valley Medical Reserve Corps

WWW.UMVMRC.ORG

Spring Update
April 2007

A Message from Your Staff

As we spring into a new season, we have a lot to be proud of, and much to look forward to in the coming year. Our membership has reached 385, with several recruitment drives ahead. Boards of health from across the Upper Merrimack Valley are including our MRC in their publications about volunteers, profiling us through newspaper articles and bulletins to local residents, as well as cable TV and Internet postings.

Our unit has been involved in an ever-widening range of valuable experiences. See this year's foldout in the middle of this newsletter to get a sense of our activities, as well as the articles on our deployments. Your efforts are receiving positive attention at regional, state, and national levels, where key partnerships are being forged. A recognition letter from the National MRC Program Office is on page 2.

The MRC program continues to expand across the nation and in the Bay State. As of this writing, there are 646 MRC units across the U.S., with nearly 122,000 members and counting. We look forward to connecting with program leadership from around the country at April's annual MRC conference in Rhode Island – knowing that there are units as far away as Guam and *Palau* – as we continue to learn from each other. In March, most of the 40 MA units met for our debut Best Practices Conference, where we presented and learned from other units.

Wishing you a terrific year ahead,

Sandy Collins RN, Director *Nancy Burns EMT*, Coordinator

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

CONTACT INFORMATION
Director: Sandy Collins, RN
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scollins@westfordma.gov
Coordinator: Nancy Burns, EMT
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nburns@westfordma.gov
Address: Board of Health,
55 Main St, Westford MA, 01886

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 to the UMV MRC from the National Office

Everyone – at all levels – has worked hard to establish the very necessary relationships with partner organizations and non-governmental organizations to benefit the MRC network. Leveraging these relationships has gained greater support and better resources for MRC units. National-level partnerships with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Health Resources and Services Administration, and many others enabled local MRC units to garner shared resources and even funding support from these programs. Additionally, cooperative agreements with the National Association of County and City Health Officials and the National Association of Local Boards of Health are working to build the capacity of MRC units, strengthen the ties between the MRC at all levels and the nation's public health system, and provide local boards with information on the MRC.

The Upper Merrimack Valley MRC maintains a close relationship with the MRC program office. Nancy Burns, UMV MRC Coordinator, has played an integral part in the MRC Capacity Building Work Group and will present at the upcoming MRC National Leadership and Training Conference. Sandy Collins, MRC UMV Director, will also participate in the MRC conference and recently attended the Public Health Preparedness Summit in Washington, DC, where she visited with MRC staff at the exhibit booth and helped to build awareness for the program. UMV MRC events are reported to the MRC program office regularly and shared as best practices for other units across the country.

Each relationship improves the sustainability of this national network of organized and prepared MRC units. You are all vital players in this effort. From the ground level up, we are working together to make powerful advancements for the Medical Reserve Corps program's ability to not only sustain itself, but also continue to grow in strength and numbers. Thank you for your continued dedication. The MRC Program Office looks forward to hearing about the many exciting activities you participate in during the coming quarter. *Captain Robert Tosatto and Staff*

Lt. Marna Hoard (MRC), Michele Levy (marketing consultant), Michael Fraser (CDC/NACCHO), Michelle Chuk (NACCHO), Grace Middleton (MRC), Capt. Robert Tosatto (Director of the MRC Program Office), and Sam Schaffzin (MRC).

WEB SITE NEWS

It's helpful when you check our web site, www.UMVMRC.org periodically, to stay current on the unit's activities.

Our most recent stories are posted under the "Latest News and Events" box on the home page. Information for several of the buttons has been updated recently, including the answers to Frequently Asked Questions. When we are about to launch another series of health fairs and training events, the details are usually posted right away under the MRC Calendar and Training Opportunities. Please keep checking!

ADVISORY COUNCIL UPDATES

Since its inception two years ago, there have been some changes in representation through our UMV MRC Advisory Council. One representative in each of our seven towns was selected to serve as the liaison between our unit and their local health department and community. We thank them for their time and commitment to our unit!

The updated roster is as follows:

- ***Billerica*** – Brian Luttrell, EMT-P
- ***Chelmsford*** – Sue Rosa, RN
- ***Dracut*** – Ed Nadolny, CCP
- ***Lowell*** – Christine Connolly, RN
- ***Tewksbury*** – Ralph McHatton, RPh
- ***Tyngsboro*** – Diane Ceretti, RN
- ***Westford*** – Host Agency Staff

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I'd like to take this opportunity to personally thank Nancy, our UMV MRC Coordinator, for the dedication, kindness, care, and endless energy she brings to our unit. I will be forever grateful that she is in the position!

Sandy Collins, RN – Director, UMV MRC

COMING EVENTS

Please contact the coordinator at 978-399-2549 or Nburns@WestfordMA.gov if you would like to assist with health fairs or sign up for classes. Advance registration is greatly appreciated. Also check the Calendar and Training Opportunities on www.UMVMRC.org for new postings.

I. Health Fairs

Members are needed to staff MRC display tables, and to offer public education on various health issues. These events offer a community service, while raising awareness and potentially recruiting for the Medical Reserve Corps.

Billerica Health Fair
Saturday, April 14, 10 a.m to 2 p.m.
Marshall Middle School
15 Floyd Street, Billerica 01821

Healthy Kids Day
Saturday, May 5, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
YMCA
35 YMCA Dr., Lowell MA 01852

Westford Health Fair
Saturday, June 23, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Abbot Middle School
25 Depot Street, Westford 01886

II. Training Opportunities

Pandemic Planning: How to Prepare in the Home and Community
Dr. Alfred DeMaria, Chief Medical Officer of MDPH and
Dr. Lisa Stone, Acting Director of the Center for Emergency Preparedness
Tuesday, May 15, 7 to 9 p.m.
Stony Brook School Auditorium
9 Farmer Way, Westford 01886 (off Route 40)
Applying for 2 free CEUs and 2 free OEMS credits

Bloodborne Pathogens
Wednesday, May 16, 7 to 9 p.m.
JV Fletcher Library
50 Main Street, Westford 01886
Applying for 2 free CEUs and 2 free OEMS credits

CPR/AED for HealthCare Providers
Saturday, May 19, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
United Methodist Church
10 Church Street, Westford 01886
Successful completion of this six-hour class for medical care providers results in certification by the updated American Heart Association standards. ***Cost***: Discounted $15 fee to cover the cost of materials.

Heartsaver CPR/AED
Tuesday, May 22, 6 to 10 p.m.
Millennium School
25R Depot Street, Westford 01886
Successful completion of this four-hour class for non-medical care providers results in certification by the updated American Heart Association standards. ***Cost***: Discounted $15 fee to cover the cost of materials.

ICS-100 and NIMS-700
Online @ http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/crslist.asp
It is important that all responders are aware of Incident Command concepts. Please take these classes at your leisure. Once completed, a certificate will be issued. Notify us of completion, so we can record this information on our records.

ARE YOU BEING SERVED?

For urgent deployments and announcements, our first contact to members is *always* done by e-mail. This method costs nothing, and lets us reach hundreds of members instantly at the press of a button, allowing members to answer just as rapidly.

This method was particularly effective during the flooding disaster in May 2006. ONE message was sent to our UMV MRC distribution list requesting assistance. Within hours, we heard back from 53 members, many in a matter of minutes. (One of those members was in Mississippi on a Katrina relief mission at the time! She still replied immediately – letting us know that she'd have responded if she was home.)

However, we are well aware that not everyone has e-mail, and that PCs can be out of service on occasion for various reasons. Spam filters have been rejecting some addresses that worked in the past. We don't usually need all 385 members for every deployment, so we rely on other methods when necessary in an emergency, including a phone tree. We also use postal mail for less urgent matters.

Please know that it's important to us that we can reach you as quickly as possible. We want you to be informed of news and opportunities, as well as emergency deployments. Here are some steps you can take to make it easier to contact you in a hurry:

- Check to see how your spam filters can be adapted to accept our messages.
- Let us know of changes to your contact information, so we can ensure that our records are up to date.
- If you haven't heard from us in a while, please call or send an e-mail, so we can verify that we've typed your information correctly.
- Ask to see our roster at the next event you attend, so we can check your data.

CORE COMPETENCIES FOR MRC VOLUNTEERS

Based on national recommendations for MRC members, we encourage all active members of our MRC unit, at a minimum, to be able to:

1. Describe the procedures necessary to protect the *health, safety, and overall well-being* of themselves, their families, the team, and the community.
2. Document that the member has a *personal and family preparedness plan* in place.
3. Describe the *chain of command* (Emergency Management Systems, ICS, NIMS), the integration of the MRC, and its application to a given incident.
4. Describe the role of the local MRC unit in *public health and emergency response*, and its application to a given incident.
5. Describe the member's *communication* role (s) with respect to response partners, the media, the general public, and others.
6. Describe the impact of an event on the *mental health* of the member, responders, and others.
7. Demonstrate the ability to follow *Standard Operating Procedures* for their a assignment, activation, reporting, and deactivation.
8. Identify limits to their own skills, knowledge, and abilities as they pertain to the role of the MRC.

Units are encouraged to provide training that is geared toward this common set of knowledge, skills, and abilities. Thus the UMV MRC strives to build these competencies across our membership.

WHAT'S IN A BADGE?

Some of our longer-term members may be wondering whether their old UMV MRC badges are still current. Newer members may want to know when they'll receive their own ID.

We have postponed issuing new badges to our members because of a very positive development at a higher level. If voted upon by units across the state, Massachusetts would become one of the first states in the union to agree on a statewide MRC badge! (Your coordinator is chairing that committee.)

When a template is approved, all units will be encouraged to use the final badge design. Among many advantages, our badge would allow units to recognize other members if we are deployed across regions in a large-scale disaster.

RECRUITMENT: WAYS YOU CAN HELP

Our unit is about to launch another series of recruitment drives and promotional activities. Your input is always welcome in suggesting *events* within the Upper Merrimack Valley where our unit should have a presence, as well as *partnerships* with other agencies that could be mutually beneficial. We are looking to capitalize on 'National Public Health Week,' 'National Volunteer Week,' and other designated days or weeks that spotlight our initiatives.

Feel free to call or send us e-mail with your ideas! Also, consider taking on the personal challenge of bringing in at least one new member this season. One of our recruitment priorities is for *medical* professionals – including practicing or retired physicians, nurses, paramedics, pharmacists, and dentists. We also cherish our *non-medical* members, as we rely on them for key support functions: ham radio operations, administrative tasks, translators, and numerous jobs that arise during our ongoing operations, as well as unexpected demands in disasters. Please refer anyone who may be interested to our web site, and encourage them to submit an application for membership.

We cannot emphasize enough the value of having as many and as varied a pool of volunteers as possible – volunteers who are identified and trained in advance, and willing to help – to call on during emergencies. Even if they can respond only once a year, their involvement is terribly important!

Health directors across the region are working hard to ensure that MRC response is incorporated into each community's emergency management plans. Take advantage of every opportunity you can to raise awareness of the MRC system with your town's government officials and local leaders.

Please let us know if you have special skills or interest in the following areas, so we can match you with the appropriate team leader for ad-hoc projects: communications (radio as well as correspondence), training, recruitment, fundraising, and emergency preparedness.

Interested in Volunteering in a State or National Disaster? Join MSAR.

MSAR (Massachusetts System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals), is our state's component of the national volunteer registry program. Each state's registry is a database of pre-credentialed health care professionals who agree to volunteer their services during a large-scale, governor-declared emergency. A primary advantage of MSAR is that it would avoid double-counting volunteers. This issue is particularly relevant for those who are members of more than one database, and thus might be requested at the same time by multiple agencies.

When volunteers register with MSAR, they become part of an alert system that is activated only when there is a significant declared disaster. If you are interested in volunteering your time for events above and beyond your local commitments, register at www.mass.gov/MSAR. Make sure you designate MRC as your "first call," which allows us to determine if we have enough volunteers for a local event, prior to the deployment.

Here's what kept us busy over the past year!

Dr. Alfred DeMaria, Chief Medical Officer of MDPH, kicked off our year with a presentation on pandemic/Avian influenza.

Health fairs included our first corporate event, at G.E. in Billerica.

We welcomed our 300th member at an MRC Information Session in Tewksbury.

New training classes covered Critical Incident Stress Management and Pediatric Triage.

The staff attended the national MRC conference in Dallas, Texas. The Coordinator represented New England MRCs in the NAC-CHO/MRC task force, to promote the program across the U.S.

Volunteers helped with a Mass Casualty Drill at Saints Memorial Medical Center.

The Coordinator presented at an MDPH panel on vulnerable populations in disaster. The Director moderated a MHOA forum and presented at a MAPHN annual conference. Both events raised awareness of MRCs.

Upper Merrimack Valley
Medical Reserve Corps

medical reserve corps

Members responded to the regional flooding disaster in May, at a Lowell hospital and two shelters.

Our second anniversary celebration included a backpack-filling party and other festivities.

We participated in large numbers during November, by staffing 10 flu clinics across the region.

We supported our first regional immunization clinic: a full-scale EDS exercise, using the Incident Command System and a new communications plan.