

PENNSYLVANIA

Highlights of State Council Activities

The Pennsylvania Citizen Corps program is managed by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA). Due to multiple disasters and a change in program leadership, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Citizen Corps Program is still in its infancy. Despite these hurdles, the Pennsylvania Citizen Corps was very successful in strengthening existing county Councils and expanding the number of Councils in the Commonwealth. The State registered 31 new county Citizen Corps Councils in 2005 alone and distributed 80 percent of the Citizen Corps funds available to the county Councils toward accomplishing this expansion.

Progress was also made in expanding the role of Citizen Corps in the Commonwealth's Homeland Security Strategy and the Citizen Corps Program was included in the State Enhancement Plan, as well as in the Governance Structure of the Homeland Security and Emergency Planning Committee.

Highlights of State Activities

Public Education and Outreach

Both Jefferson and Schuylkill Citizen Corps Councils partnered with private sector businesses in their 2005 outreach endeavors. Jefferson County and the Wal-Mart in Punxsutawney hosted the First Annual Safety Awareness Night reaching out to over 300 customers with brochures and items promoting public safety and preparedness. In addition, Schuylkill County partnered with the Pottsville-area Lowe's for their Safety Day.

Union County utilized an innovative approach to reach out to citizens. For the Lewisburg 4th of July parade, as well as several other parades in the county, they created a float promoting CERT and Citizen Corps. Each of these events drew several hundred people.

Training and Exercises

Carbon County Citizen Corps Council used its CERT members, in partnership with the Palmerton Area School District, to assist in structural collapse exercises at two local elementary schools. In addition, the county hosted a CERT Rodeo for 70 members, providing hands-on refresher training in fire suppression, triage, cribbing and basic search and rescue.

Volunteer Programs and Support

The City of Johnstown Police Department, with funding from the Cambria County Citizen Corps Council, held its first Citizen's Police Academy in 2005 and graduated 86 volunteers. These citizens will now be liaisons for general police department operations, including the Neighborhood Watch Program.

Support for Hurricane Katrina Response

Pennsylvania Citizen Corps and Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) provided support for multiple local health program responses. MRC members from Allegheny, Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Erie, Fulton, Huntingdon and York counties deployed under various missions, and in support of organizations such as the American Red Cross and National Disaster Medical System (NDMS)/DHS Disaster Medical Assistance Teams (DMAT). Volunteers staffed special needs shelters, were members of immunization and primary care strike teams, and worked as Disaster Assistance Employees.

The Lancaster MRC shared its Internet-based Health Passport with MRC units across the nation to help assure that critical information about volunteer health histories was available during the response.

National Preparedness Month

Members of Governor Edward G. Rendell's Homeland Security Cabinet participated in a press conference in the East Wing Rotunda of the State Capitol Building in Harrisburg to kick-off National Preparedness Month 2005. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania also hosted a National Preparedness Month Public Safety Fair that included numerous displays and preparedness information distributed by the PA Emergency Management Agency, Office of the State Fire Commissioner, Pennsylvania State Police, PA Department of Health, Department of Environmental Protection, PA Department of Agriculture, Department of Insurance, Public Utility Commission, PA Task Force One/Urban Search and Rescue Team (USAR), the American Red Cross and the Hospital Association of Pennsylvania.

Many county Councils also sponsored public safety outreach events during the month. Cameron County Citizen Corps Council partnered with a local pharmacy to help elementary school children build their own first-aid kits and learn about emergency preparedness through distribution of coloring books and totes. In addition, they provided Disaster Preparedness Programs to all of the county's senior centers.

Other counties conducted public preparedness seminars for businesses, schools, youth programs, and special needs populations. Some created radio public service announcements, distributed commuter outreach brochures, and participated in community days or hosted safety fairs. They also distributed Federal Emergency Management Agency's Are You Ready materials.

Overall, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the County Citizen Corps Councils hosted or participated in over 43 events, reaching out to approximately 20,000 citizens.