

VIRGINIA

Highlights of State Council Activities

Virginia Citizen Corps, managed by the Virginia Emergency Management Agency (VEMA), has developed programs aimed at improving the emergency preparedness of all sectors of a community. Virginia's state and local Citizen Corps programs continue successful educational partnerships with EMS, Virginia Fire & Life Safety Educators, Fire Programs, National Organization on Disabilities, and others. Virginia's local Citizen Corps programs also partner with numerous national organizations including We Care America, AmeriCorps, National Red Cross, Amateur Radio, Civil Air Patrol and the Boy Scouts. The State Citizen Corps Office and local Councils also work with university research groups from George Mason and James Madison Universities on regional sheltering and bioterrorism citizen role initiatives.

In 2005, Virginia's Citizen Corps Program focused on at-risk populations at the state and local level. Among other activities, the program hosted a day-and-a-half training session in which more than 100 attendees looked at the needs and gaps in emergency preparedness for vulnerable populations. Local accomplishments included the identification of these populations through door-to-door surveys, forums and community mapping; the identification of sheltering options and skilled personnel; and the installation of non-traditional emergency communication systems for outreach. The program is conducting additional efforts throughout the state to reach non-English speaking populations.

Highlights of State Activities

Public Education and Outreach

In 2005, Virginia's State Citizen Corps Council, in partnership with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, launched the Virginia Business Emergency Survival Toolkit, an online emergency preparedness resource for businesses and nonprofit organizations. Since its official launch in June of 2005, the Virginia Business Emergency Survival Toolkit Web site has had over 20,000 visits.

Local Councils conducted an enormous amount of outreach. Fairfax County, for example, organized an outreach program to 1,200 faith community organizations to present programs on emergency preparedness and disaster planning. In Central Shenandoah Valley, Citizen Corps created and distributed a Hurricane Preparedness Guide and a 2006 disaster preparedness information calendar.

Training and Exercises

Virginia Citizen Corps partnered with the Virginia Crime Prevention Association to reach out to law enforcement and public safety personnel through three joint Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training seminars. The state office has also partnered with the City of Richmond and the Capitol Police to provide CERT training to more than 50 Capitol Hill State

Employees. A contract with the Red Cross provided the first online and hands-on CPR training for participants.

Chesapeake City hosted a three-day exercise at the Dominion Virginia Power Facility and conducted training classes for citizens and teachers, and now has 350 CERT members. Similarly, Colonial Heights conducted special CERT training for high school EMT students, and Tazewell County provided a free class to teach citizens American Sign Language to help serve the hearing impaired. Gloucester County Citizen Corps had an active first year, establishing a teen CERT program that trains local Boy Scouts, and partnering with local military installations to provide CERT training on the bases. Loudoun County Citizen Corps had 98 members participate in a Public Health Medication Dispensing exercise and Roanoke Valley Council members participated in a drill, acting as emergency responders in a school during a tornado.

Several local Councils and CERT programs offered preparedness training for businesses including Capitol One, PBS and Nextel. Virginia partnered with Metro Transit to train National Capital Region CERT members in its Metro Citizen Corps program and educated members about rail safety procedures.

Volunteer Programs and Support

Citizen Corps volunteers assisted local governments in the response and recovery efforts for declared emergencies in seven counties and six cities. The Williamsburg Citizen Corps Council created a neighborhood sector system that identifies all neighborhoods and their citizen needs and risks.

In Hampton, Citizen Corps partnered with local Wal-Mart stores during Governor Mark Warner's 2005 campaign to repair and winterize homes selected by local government. This joint effort has grown into a strong partnership, with Wal-Mart donating \$1,000 to Hampton's Buckroe Volunteer Fire Company in May for Citizen Corps activities.

Support for Hurricane Katrina Response

Virginia Citizen Corps mobilized hundreds of Citizen Corps volunteers to provide services in partnership with Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters, and deployed as Red Cross or faith-based volunteers to the Gulf area. Others helped with the distribution of supplies and sheltering of evacuees through local community nonprofit and faith-based efforts.

The state Citizen Corps Office managed the Virginia Public Inquiry Center with information on volunteering, donations, and emergency preparedness. Nearly 50 Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteers supported operations throughout the state and approximately 200 MRC members were on call for deployment. Local volunteers helped staff phone banks, loaded trucks with donated goods sent to the Gulf area, located families willing to house evacuees, served food, and provided other services with local faith organizations.

National Preparedness Month

In September 2005, as part of National Preparedness Month activities, Arlington County Citizen Corps organized a massive outreach effort to educate Virginia residents about the complexities of emergencies and disasters. On the launch day for National Preparedness Month in

Washington, D.C., a volunteer from Virginia Citizen Corps spoke about the importance of community preparedness and introduced Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff.