

Oregon MRC volunteers travel northward for FMS training

On June 13, Oregon and Washington MRC volunteers teamed up in an effort to make the Pacific Northwest more self-sufficient during times of emergency. Crossing state lines, 28 Oregon MRC volunteers joined their northern colleagues at the Puyallup Fairgrounds & Event Center in Puyallup, WA, for an eight-hour crash course in the assemblage and operation of a Federal Medical Station (FMS).



An FMS is a rapidly deployable 250-bed alternate care facility, capable of housing, triaging, and holding displaced patients for whom local acute care systems are incapacitated. Deployed by four truckloads from the CDC's nearest Strategic National Stockpile site, each FMS has approximately three days of supplies, and consists of three modules: basic support, treatment, and pharmaceuticals.

Previous FMS deployments have included the supplies as well as federal staff to help construct the facility. With federal assistance, it should take no longer than 12 hours to get the station fully operational. This particular training, however, tested a bold new concept – building and staffing an FMS without federal help.

“My goal with the training was to provide some level of familiarization with running an alternate care facility, and using the federal cache of supplies and equipment to do that,” said Sally Abbott, Medical Surge Coordinator for the state of Washington and the FMS training's planner. “I think it will take a little bit more work [towards self-sufficiency], but I'm more confident now after seeing the enthusiasm and the flexibility of the folks that were here, that we could do it.”

The training's events included volunteers manually assembling some of the beds, learning about proper bed layout, shelter hygiene and cleanliness, familiarization with FMS inventory, as well as triage and role-playing as mock victims.

“This [training] was a step in the right direction, but it's a baby step, because this is creating a health care facility in time of crisis for people who are medically fragile, where one didn't exist before. This was a barn on Monday. Tuesday and Wednesday, we've made it into a health care facility. You're building it from the ground up, that's very challenging and these folks were willing to work with us to do that, so that's incredible,” said Abbott.

Mary Selecky, Washington State Secretary of Health, and Puyallup Mayor Rick Hansen made brief appearances and toured the fairgrounds, both extolling the importance of emergency preparedness.

“We didn't have this asset available to us [previously],” said Selecky. “We're very pleased that the government continues to invest in community needs.”

The training also fostered a sense of camaraderie between the two MRCs – camaraderie that may be a valuable asset one day.

“I think it's really important for us in the Northwest to work together with our neighbors,” said Alisa Ward, Linn County MRC volunteer and a mental health registered nurse. “One of the points that they made several times is that the area affected by the disaster may not have that many available volunteers because those people are going to be involved with their own families, their own jobs. They may require help from outside volunteers to come in and provide some extra support.”

Abbott agreed.

“The bottom line is that when we have a disaster, we have people who will need medical care. We share a very long border with Oregon, and I think it's important that we help each other out. Our goal here is that we take care of as many people as possible and do the best that we can.”

This year's MRC spring training event a success

On May 19, more than 50 volunteers gathered at the Washington County Conference Center for this year's Medical Reserve Corps spring training event. Nine presenters taught a total of 11 different classes throughout the day. Some of the volunteers' favorite classes included:



Cooking in the dark

For \$15, volunteers got all the information plus all the tools needed to make an "Apple Box Oven," and cook in the event of an emergency in which water and electricity are unavailable.

Disaster sanitation: what to do with pee and poo

Volunteers learned practical techniques to prepare for and handle human waste, because wherever there is a concentration of people, gross and dangerous wastes can collect and affect everybody's health and well-being.

Community preparedness

Sue Mohnkern, Washington County Public Health Preparedness Program Supervisor, gave a pilot presentation of an emergency preparedness course, specifically designed so that everyday citizens can access it and, in turn, teach to their own communities. Attendees brought their cumulative experience to the test presentation, and provided valuable input which will help polish the final product.

Special recognition goes to Christopher Goodwin for making this year's spring training possible.

Oregon MRC members attend 2012 Integrated Training Summit

The 2012 Integrated Medical, Public Health, Preparedness and Response Training took place May 21-25 at the Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center in Nashville, Tennessee. Hailing from all over the nation, more than 2,000 stakeholders from the National Disaster Medical System, Medical Reserve Corps, Emergency System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals, and the United States Public Health Service attended the summit. Thirteen members from this year's Oregon Health Authority & AmeriCorps*VISTA Partnership were also among the event's attendees.



The five-day forum facilitated the coordination, collaboration, and interaction amongst its target audience -- the leaders and members of the nation's preeminent preparedness and response partner organizations. With more than 100 unique emergency preparedness workshops and presentations offered, the summit enhanced the knowledge, skills, and abilities its participants, which, in turn, will improve their capability to deliver public health and medical care services during disasters of any origin in the future.

A number of the attendees were also honored with awards, including Oregon's very own state MRC coordinator, Akiko Berkman. Her outstanding devotion to duty in the service of others earned her the Elizabeth Fitch Memorial Leadership Award. Congratulations, Akiko!

SERV-OR volunteers play integral role at Vigilant Guard exercise

On May 3, the final day of a three-day Vigilant Guard statewide exercise, 23 SERV-OR volunteers joined the Oregon National Guard, Lane County Fire Department, and other public safety agencies at the Eugene Airport to practice and improve patient tracking during a disaster.



More than 130 Guard members were assigned as mock victims, assuming roles as injured civilians in a stadium collapse scenario. The emergency service organizations worked together to successfully triage, transport, and track these victims.

“The important thing is cooperation between some really very different organizations, and being able to integrate together, to account for everybody, and to use your resources in the best possible way so you can do the most with as little as you have,” said Peggy Pierson, logistics chief for the Oregon Disaster Medical Team. “This exercise builds relationships, and one day this will pay off in a very big way for us.”

The exercise originally called for patients to be loaded onto C-130 military aircraft scheduled to land during the simulation, but, unfortunately, the weather did not cooperate. Pierson, however, embraced the less-than-perfect conditions.

“This is like what happens in a real disaster. Plans change, and you have to be flexible, and it means you have to be able to manage your patients in the interim, until the transportation arrives. It’s a good thing.”

Vigilant Guard was a three-day, major national emergency exercise organized by the U.S. Northern Command. The first day simulated a tornado touchdown in southeast Salem, and the second featured Blackhawk helicopters evacuating patients from the University of Oregon campus.

Susan Aarseth, Clackamas County MRC volunteer and a 30-year occupational health nurse, participated in the last two days of the event. She was particularly active during the stadium collapse simulation.

“I evaluated victims, and got them transported off-site. I also went on a reconnaissance to get patients, where I did casualty evaluations and sent them back to the hospital waiting area to be treated and sent away,” said Aarseth. “This has been an eye-opening event, and it’s the right thing to do. I think it’s very important for the communications to all come together during a large-scale disaster.”

AmeriCorps*VISTA Chris Goodwin gets good win

Christopher Goodwin was recognized at the 2012 Volunteer Awards event by the Multnomah County Citizen Involvement Committee on April 18. Chris was an AmeriCorps*VISTA serving as the Volunteer Coordinator for the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) programs in Multnomah, Washington and Columbia Counties.

He worked to build capacity within the MRC programs to further the regular community and public health activities of volunteers within the programs. Across the three

counties, Chris provided coordination for over 640 MRC volunteers! He presented at volunteer orientation training, planned the logistics for regional training events and outreach activities, and notified volunteers of all training opportunities. Additionally, Chris processed all new MRC volunteers for the three counties through the web-based State Emergency Registry of Volunteers in Oregon (SERV-OR) system. Originally from the Pacific Northwest, Chris obtained his bachelor's degree from Portland State University and then became an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) for the City and County of Honolulu prior to joining the Oregon Health Authority & AmeriCorps*VISTA project. Chris is currently working as a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Public Health Associate in Queens, New York.



Chris' commitment to the MRC project, along with his practical approach and willingness to get the job done, was very much appreciated!

Special thanks to Zumana Rios for the content contribution.

SERV-OR now offers online orientation

Thank you for being a member of SERV-OR. In an effort to provide a more convenient means to complete orientation, SERV-OR is pleased to announce a new online course.



You can complete the course online in about 30 minutes to get an essential overview of the volunteer program, liability protection, required training, and more.

Get credit by completing the very short survey at the end of the course.

Refresh your memory by returning to take this orientation again any time you want.

Technical problems? The most common solution is to [download the latest Adobe Flash Player](#). The course works best in Internet Explorer. Or contact us at SERV.OR@state.or.us or toll-free during business hours at 877-343-5767.