

NEBRASKA

Highlights of State Council Activities

The Nebraska State Citizen Corps Council serves as a link between the National Citizen Corps initiative and county Councils throughout Nebraska. County Councils are encouraged to partner with community groups and local networks to incorporate strengths and foster cooperation. Leadership from the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the Nebraska Volunteer Service Commission maintains partnerships with statewide affiliate programs. The Council meets annually to determine grant funding and direction for Nebraska Citizen Corps County Councils, and to direct the Citizen Corps State Point of Contact and NEMA public information officer to manage and lead statewide initiatives.

The State Council members focus their efforts on engaging ways to reach the vulnerable populations in the planning, exercise, and training process with particular emphasis on non-native English speakers, caretakers of people with cognitive disabilities, people with disabilities, senior citizens, and youth.

Highlights of State Activities

Public Education and Outreach

Nebraska's Volunteer Educator Program trained volunteers to speak to local groups about preparedness and to recruit for local training and volunteer opportunities. Training topics included "Running an Emergency Volunteer Center," the "Disaster Strikes" table top exercise, and a scenario-based exercise called "Neighbors Prepare." The speakers took the opportunity to recruit individuals to become registered emergency volunteers, participate in local training opportunities and to consider ongoing volunteer service with local organizations. There are currently 24 individuals identified as Volunteer Educators working in four different Citizen Corps Councils, with support and connections to local Emergency Management offices, health departments, Behavioral Health Services, Medical Reserve Corps, Senior Corps and AmeriCorps.

Training and Exercises

In June 2005, the Nebraska Citizen Corps held the "Live the Adventure" Exercise/Conference. Volunteer leaders from counties across the state participated in a Citizen Corps Conference focusing on community experience in disaster response. Conference participants stayed overnight at the local Salvation Army gymnasium following an introductory training on setting up a Red Cross shelter, psychological first-aid training, and information about Canine Crisis Response. During the second day of the exercise, volunteers participated in a basic VOAD introductory training, received instruction from the State Patrol about "spotting" methamphetamine labs and drug activity, and previewed the "Bio-Attack" video from Fred Friendly Seminars' *In the Balance* series.

Omaha, Lincoln, North Platte, Valentine, Beatrice, Hastings and Norfolk used CERT teams and trained individuals in their community exercises for local emergency management and in support of bio-preparedness efforts. Omaha also frequently uses the Medical Reserve Corps in exercises and safety expositions.

Volunteer Programs and Support

Keith County Citizen Corps responded to an alert on August 25 regarding the presence of E.coli bacteria in the municipal water supply. Beginning on the evening of August 25 through the morning of August 31, Citizen Corps volunteers delivered bottled water twice a day to those unable to pick up their donated water supply from the primary distribution point at the Ogallala Fire department.

Support for Hurricane Katrina Response

This year, Council members supported the Katrina evacuees at a Red Cross shelter by providing medical care through the Medical Reserve Corps, security, and various psychological first aid support from Citizen Corps volunteers and CERT trained individuals. Nearly 700 Omaha Citizen Corps volunteers were on standby to provide support in the planned relocation at the Civic Auditorium. The Salvation Army, the United Way and other community groups worked together to provide sustained support to Katrina Evacuees.

National Preparedness Month

In celebration of National Preparedness Month, eight County Councils developed parties and preparedness activities during the August National Night Out “24/7” Campaign. Organizers encouraged individuals to “Pledge to Prepare” themselves for a 9/11 “Redeem the Day” competition and to engage in National Preparedness Month activities. The Redeem the Day movement was part of the 24/7 Citizen Corps campaign to be ready anytime and to help others prepare and respond to disasters and emergencies. Participants commit their group, their family and/or themselves as they “Pledge to Prepare.” Incentives were made available for groups and families who organized a preparedness event. In September, the “Pledge” was distributed at county fairs with the additional challenge to view the Fred Friendly Seminars series *In the Balance*, which aired on PBS on September 12 and 19. The Redeem the Day competition concluded with the Lincoln Area Agency on Aging Senior Companion program winning the award for the more than 50 individuals who pledged to prepare their companions for appropriate emergency response.