

PUERTO RICO

Highlights of State Council Activities

The Puerto Rico State Emergency Management Agency (PRSEMA) is responsible for the implementation of the Citizen Corps Program in Puerto Rico. The Commonwealth has developed a Territorial Citizen Corps Council, which includes representatives from the Governor's Office, PRSEMA, and the police, fire, health, homeland security and faith-based communities. Puerto Rico has developed Citizen Corps Councils in 76 of its 78 municipalities. PRSEMA has encouraged the municipalities to participate in Citizen Corps, specifically in the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program, by providing them with economic support and CERT safety equipment. Citizen Corps funds have assisted local Councils in the acquisition of equipment and training materials. The Puerto Rico Department of Health (PRDOH) coordinates and manages the Commonwealth's Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) program.

Highlights of State Activities

Public Education and Outreach

In November 2005, PRSEMA developed and launched an island-wide CERT educational campaign. Local media promoted the campaign in newspapers, televised interviews, and TV and radio spots. The campaign has resulted in the registration of approximately 800 residents for CERT training.

Puerto Rico's MRC is focusing on developing a public awareness campaign promoting the program on radio, public transportation advertisements, electronic message boards at train and bus stations, billboards at public transportation street stops and at selected academic institution bulletin boards, specifically targeting institutions with medical and pharmaceutical students.

Training and Exercises

PRSEMA provided Basic CERT training and the CERT Train-the-Trainer Course to its citizens. In 2005, the Commonwealth trained 7,200 volunteers from schools, private and public agencies, special populations to include the elderly and those with language barriers, and faith-based organizations. The program has 64 CERT instructors composed of 32 territorial employees and 32 private sector and community volunteers.

In December 2005, Puerto Rico provided the CERT Train-the-Trainer Course for 75 new bilingual instructors and planned to provide a "Refresher Course" for these instructors. The Commonwealth planned a CERT Train-the-Trainer Course for October 2006 with the expectation of graduating 150 new CERT instructors.

In 2005, CERT training was offered to the following agencies and organizations: First Adventist Church; Columbia College; Job Corps; Puerto Rico Telephone Company; Emergency Management Offices; United Evangelical Church of Puerto Rico; University of Puerto Rico,

Aguadilla Campus; MAPFRE Insurance Company; Hewlett Packard; University of the East, SSS Insurance Company, U.S. Corps of Engineers, and Severo Colberg School.

Volunteer Programs and Support

PRSEMA, which manages the CERT program, has provided training and CERT equipment to local Councils to assist their CERT volunteers. As part of the CERT program, exercises are developed so that students can learn best practices and evaluate their progress in retaining the training they've received.

PRSEMA has received letters from schools and children's organizations expressing their interest in getting involved with CERT. The CERT 2006 work plan includes adapting the CERT modules for young adults under 18, as well as modules for people with special needs.

The PRDOH's primary goal for the MRC program is to promote awareness and positive messages about the benefits of joining the program. The MRC program will be working with its program partner, CERT and Puerto Rico Red Cross and the Fondos Unidos of Puerto Rico to further leverage volunteer resources in the Commonwealth. An MRC planning committee was formed to spearhead the program. The Committee is focusing efforts on developing a program recruitment brochure that will be used to bring awareness to essential medical facilities and community-based organizations.

Support for Hurricane Katrina Response

Although ultimately Puerto Rico's Citizen Corps volunteers did not assist in the response efforts for Hurricane Katrina, volunteers were willing to assist if called upon.

National Preparedness Month

The Puerto Rico Citizen Corps Office, along with the MRC program, is making plans for an awareness campaign to be held during September 2006 in recognition of National Preparedness Month.