

GEORGIA

Highlights of State Council Activities

Through Georgia Citizen Corps, citizens have the opportunity to work together to strengthen their local communities. At the state level, the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) coordinates Citizen Corps activities to facilitate the locally driven initiative by working closely with established Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) and Georgia Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (GaVOAD) to build a relationship between the public and private sectors within the state.

Through the Homeland Security Grant Program, Citizen Corps funds are competitively distributed with 80% going to the local jurisdictions for the development of new programs and the maintenance of established Citizen Corps programs.

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Public Education and Outreach

The Georgia Office of Homeland Security and Georgia Citizen Corps developed emergency preparedness door hangers that describe the items to be included in a disaster supply kit and a place to document a family communications plan, in the event of a disaster. The Georgia Citizen Corps, in conjunction with the Georgia Area 8 CERT initiative, developed a bilingual awareness pamphlet, *When Disaster Strikes*, which covers all disasters that are prominent to the state of Georgia. These pamphlets were distributed to each Emergency Management Agency (EMA) office throughout the state, which included information about the CERT program. The GEMA Public Affairs Division aired hurricane preparedness messages at the beginning of hurricane season, which were delivered through Georgia Public Broadcasting Association.

Many communities have taken great effort to raise awareness about Citizen Corps. First aid booths at various festivals and fairs throughout the year as well as information on how citizens can get involved through Citizen Corps have helped educate citizens across the state. Locally, Chatham County Citizen Corps Council hosted a National Preparedness Night in partnership with the local baseball team to reach approximately 4,000 Georgians with a preparedness message when entering the stadium.

Training and Exercises

Georgia Citizen Corps coordinated several training events across the state, including, CERT training for the staff at the FEMA Region IV office in Atlanta and nine CERT Train-the-Trainer courses. A Citizen Corps Awareness course, developed in conjunction with the metro Atlanta chapter of the Red Cross and OHS-GEMA, was presented throughout the northern region of the state. At the first Citizen Corps Conference, workshops ranged from a myriad of topics, including: Internet Safety, Medical Reserve Corps, Fire Corps, Chemical Safety Investigation, Moulage Training for Exercises, Teen SERT, and Citizen Corps.

Locally, Columbia County CERT program members participated in a countywide Hazardous Materials Transportation Accident exercise by performing the initial search and rescue efforts. These team members have also completed various other supplemental training, to include National Weather Service's Storm Ready training and many of the FEMA Independent study courses.

Volunteer Programs and Support

The first statewide Citizen Corps Conference was held March 27-28 in Americus, GA. During the May 3-5, 2006 Georgia Emergency Management Agency Conference a Citizen Corps presentation highlighted the many Citizen Corps best practices taking place across the state. The Georgia Citizen Corps Office also participated in statewide MRC meetings and the regional VIPS meeting held in Atlanta, GA.

Georgia also scheduled New Directors briefings twice a year for newly appointed local EMA directors and new executive staff at the local EMA office. At these briefings, time was allotted for Citizen Corps presentations to help explain what composes the programs and who should be contacted for further assistance.

Support for Hurricane Katrina Response

Georgia Citizen Corps volunteers have been actively involved in hurricane response both in Georgia and on deployment in Mississippi. Citizen Corps volunteers assisted with processing, sheltering and caring for the more than 29,700 evacuees in the metro Georgia area including the counties of Cobb, Clayton, and Fulton and the city of Morrow. Thirteen members of the Columbia CERT team were deployed through EMAC to assist in the response and recovery efforts in Mississippi. Medical Reserve Corps volunteers with the East Health District and DeKalb County staffed a processing and medical care facility in a hotel serving as a shelter for evacuees. Chatham County's MRC program had 21-members provide assistance by performing a variety of duties. These members conducted Search & Rescue aboard boats in New Orleans, delivered medical supplies to a small rural hospital, and delivered food, water, and non-medical supplies to a church / relief organization in Bogalusa. In addition, they opened a relief/medical shelter in Baton Rouge, assisted in medical care to the patients of LSU Medical Center, and delivered generators to families in need in Mississippi. MRC volunteers also helped the cause by providing direct medical support to National Guard units on rescue missions in New Orleans and by contributing professional Search & Rescue Dogs to aid in their mission.

National Preparedness Month

In recognition of National Preparedness Month, the Georgia Citizen Corps Office, in partnership with Georgia Association of Broadcasters, aired 1,000 Public Service Announcements on radio stations across the state. The announcements took place during the week of September 5, 2005, and encouraged the public to get prepared. In support of this effort, CERT members distributed preparedness door hangers within their communities. The public awareness door hangers were distributed by the local Citizen Corps programs at fairs and in front of local stores, such as Wal-Mart.