

MISSISSIPPI

Highlights of State Council Activities

This year saw the transition of management of Mississippi's Citizen Corps program from the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency to the Mississippi Office of Homeland Security.

The Mississippi State Citizen Corps Council developed a plan to incorporate the Citizen Corps program into 44 Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) units throughout Mississippi high schools. Evacuation planning, Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training, and Neighborhood Watch participation will be emphasized, helping these future leaders grow towards active and productive involvement in their community.

The State Citizen Corps Council is also seeking to expand, incorporating greater participation from the private sector, and diversifying to include areas such as public works, banking and finance, and agriculture. With these additions, Mississippi Citizen Corps will have a broader knowledge base and a means to create innovative volunteer tasks. For the coming year, Mississippi Citizen Corps is focusing on educating and training citizens to be better prepared.

Mississippi's First Lady Marsha Barbour is the official spokesperson for the State Citizen Corps Council. In 2006, she will be the featured spokesperson for public service announcements airing on both television and radio emphasizing the need for greater evacuation planning, particularly in schools, hospitals and government buildings.

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Public Education and Outreach

Radio public service announcements were created with the First Lady detailing how to best prepare for the onset of a disaster. Three different segments of varying duration were created. Mississippi Citizen Corps also participated in the State Fair in October, distributing information and answering questions from visitors.

Training and Exercises

Mississippi Citizen Corps had a productive year in 2005. CERT Train-the-Trainer classes were conducted throughout the year for all state council members, greatly increasing Mississippi's available pool of CERT instructors. For 2005, all 82 counties received funding to conduct CERT training and all major state-funded universities currently have at least one CERT team. The University of Mississippi currently has eight teams that include both faculty and staff. Local CERT teams have incorporated an amateur radio program into their Citizens Corps efforts. Citizen Corps members who also participate in Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) participated in many activities, including two Emergency Training Nets. In addition, Citizen Corps volunteers activated SKYWARN nets at the onset of severe weather events. Recently, during one severe weather outbreak, Desoto

County's Citizen Corps volunteers spotted and reported a funnel cloud that eventually touched down in the next county.

Mississippi's State Citizen Corps Council has been working with organizations such as United Way to spread the importance of personal preparedness and awareness. One such example was a volunteer effort by the United Way to use the preparedness videos *Bio Attack* and *City Under Siege* from Fred Friendly Seminars to hold movie nights for employees and others interested in the topic, allowing for a better understanding of response efforts in a disaster.

Support for Hurricane Katrina Response

Citizen Corps volunteers were ready and able to assist even in the hardest hit areas. The Gulfport/Harrison County Medical Reserve Corps in partnership with Mississippi State Guard Medical Reserve Corps established a medical needs shelter serving 140 medically fragile evacuees and nearly 1,000 other displaced persons. The Lee County Medical Reserve Corps staffed a medical station at the local Red Cross shelter with nurses, pharmacists and administrative support. In Desoto County, the Citizen Corps Council was able to send a CERT team to the Mississippi Coast to render aid at distribution points and organize volunteers.

National Preparedness Month

While the 2005 National Preparedness Month campaign was drastically affected by the devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina in Mississippi and neighboring states, numerous events were planned and in progress to get Mississippi citizens prepared and informed. This included Preparedness Day at the Mississippi Braves stadium as well as distribution of disaster kits, which included Citizen Corps information, Red Cross material, evacuation planning, and first aid kits. NPM efforts also brought about a billboard campaign with 60 panels throughout the state encouraging preparedness, and a Web site counter and supplementary data to gauge the effectiveness of the billboard campaign.