

OHIO

Highlights of State Council Activities

Ohio Citizen Corps membership reflects state agencies and departments that are members of the State of Ohio Security Task Force (SOSTF). Members also represent community response agencies and programs. The State Council meets every other month and is a working committee of the SOSTF. The Chair has a seat on the SOSTF and reports regularly on Council activities. In February 2005, the Council developed strategic and long-range planning goals for state activities.

Ohio Citizen Corps continues to receive significant support from state leadership, including the Governor and General Assembly. Legislation extending immunity from liability for volunteers registered on the Citizen Corps database passed the General Assembly in November. This immunity applies to registered Citizen Corps volunteers serving in the event of a declared emergency and also to volunteers participating in Citizen Corps trainings, exercises and drills.

The State Council is involved with the Department of Homeland Security's strategic planning and has specific duties within several Emergency Support Functions outlined in the State of Ohio Emergency Operations Plan. The Council has two specific areas of strategic focus. First, as representatives of specific areas of homeland security efforts, members promote the Citizen Corps concept to their constituents at all levels. The second focus is to identify, promote, and offer trainings, exercises and educational opportunities in programs and disciplines that reinforce personal and community safety.

Over 8,000 Ohio residents are reported to have completed CERT training. Ohio has consistently distributed more than the required amount to counties from these grants. A portion of funding is retained at the state level to conduct CERT instructor training courses. Over 475 instructors are qualified to lead CERT classes in Ohio.

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Public Education & Outreach

In 2005, Ohio's Meigs County Citizen Corps Council focused on community education. Senior citizens were trained on weather awareness through NOAA programming. Practicing what they learned, they made presentations throughout the county to help to prepare residents in case of weather-related situations.

Ohio's Jackson County Citizen Corps Council has a strong interest in promoting youth involvement in preparedness. During 2005, under the guidance of the Regional Lead Volunteer Coordinator, a Teen Citizen Corps Council was formed to provide both educational and volunteer experience.

The Knox County Citizen Corps Council, led by an active VOAD member, created **A/LERT**, (Animal/Livestock Emergency Response Training), a specialized training program for livestock

and animal producers. Some 40 area producers have participated in the 12-hour training sessions, developed in coordination with the Ohio State University Extension Service, the Ohio Department of Agriculture and the College of Veterinary Medicine.

Training & Exercises

Over 500 volunteers from the Lucas County Citizen Corps were trained in emergency response in 2005. To comply with the state requirements for specialized training for medical volunteers, Lucas County developed an approved training regimen for its Medical Reserve Corps members.

During 2005, the Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) concept continued to evolve and expand both its scope and its process. Training sessions for volunteer staff interested in operating a VRC were held in all eight Ohio Homeland Security Regions. Participants included EMA staff, public health workers, emergency responders, AmeriCorps members and Citizen Corps volunteers.

Volunteer Programs & Support

Trumbull County offered CERT training as a benefit for the Ohio Citizen Corps volunteers. In return, volunteers supported the annual County Fair patrol and participated in a number of area events. When the need for disaster response supplies arose, Trumbull County volunteers raised funds to purchase the necessary materials. Tuscarawas County Citizen Corps, in partnership with the area Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, trained volunteers to staff the Emergency Operations Center during a declared flood emergency. These volunteers answered hundreds of phone calls from area residents concerned about their safety or the safety of relatives and friends.

Support for Hurricane Katrina Response

Citizen Corps Councils around the state offered assistance to individuals displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Other members joined with national deployment offices including the American Red Cross to actively participate onsite where possible. Locally, Franklin County Citizen Corps responded with assistance for a brand new initiative, Adopt-A-Home. This program, in partnership with local housing assistance agencies and faith-based groups, assisted displaced Gulf Coast families with furnishings, clothing, household goods and food for temporary shelter needs. Additionally, the local Council staffed a VRC to process over 200 professional medical volunteers for deployment to the affected areas if needed. The surge of Ohioans interested in volunteering resulted in more than 700 citizens registering on the Ohio Citizen Corps/Medical Reserve Corps database. Out of 400 MRC volunteers deployed to the Gulf by the American Red Cross, 64 were from Ohio.

National Preparedness Month

Unfortunately all statewide and local plans to honor National Preparedness Month were cancelled as Ohio responded to Gulf Coast needs for both personnel and material assistance.