



# FEMA Community Preparedness News

November 2007

## Citizen Corps By the Numbers

Citizen Corps Councils:	2,282
CERT	2,783
Fire Corps	687
MRC	715
NWP	14,791
VIPS	1,624

## News From Across the Nation

### *Citizen Corps Program Partners Assist with CA Wildfires*

As wildfires swept through southern California, consuming over 500,000 acres and displacing nearly one million residents, offers of assistance poured in to California Citizen Corps from around the country. California Volunteers—which houses the Governor’s State Service Commission and State Citizen Corps Council launched a Web site to help coordinate the efforts of unaffiliated volunteers and local partner volunteer centers near the affected areas. The Web site provides information about the fires, ways to help, a “Train NOW For Future Disasters” section, and a list of opportunities for training through the Citizen Corps of California Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program. Volunteer Centers of California report registering nearly 10,000 volunteers online to assist in the affected areas. Of those volunteers, nearly 1,750 have assisted by conducting drives for donations and staffing phone lines.



*Photo courtesy of FEMA*

To date, 639 CERT and Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteers are active in the response in the following jurisdictions: Los Angeles, San Diego, Orange County, Riverside, and San Bernardino. These teams have assisted with evacuation, shelter operations, traffic control, donations management, and animal sheltering.

For more information on how to assist with the wildfire recovery, visit <http://californiavolunteers.org>. Individuals who would like to make donations may also call 1-800-750-2858.



**Brock D. Bierman, Director**  
*Community Preparedness Division*

*Small State and Rural Advocate  
DHS/Federal Emergency  
Management Agency*

## **Useful Volunteers Links to Help in Disasters**

To learn more about the federal response to the California wildfires, visit [http://www.fema.gov/hazard/wildfire/ca\\_2007.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/hazard/wildfire/ca_2007.shtm)

For information about how you can help prevent and prepare for wildfire, visit <http://www.fema.gov/hazard/wildfire>.

The Points of Light Foundation—a Citizen Corps Affiliate—has established a website where individuals can register their skills and availability to help in emergencies: [www.helpindisaster.org](http://www.helpindisaster.org)

# Letter from the Director

Dear Partners in Community Preparedness,

As this newsletter approaches its production deadline, the wildfires in California have wrought untold damage throughout the southern part of the state. Nearly a million people were displaced—among them, many Citizen Corps and Partner Program volunteers. Our hearts and thoughts go out to all of you. This disaster is an unfortunate reminder of how important it is to review your own family emergency preparedness plans, including how you will communicate with each other and where you will meet if you become separated.

Amidst this crisis, we heard reports of how Citizen Corps Partners and Affiliates have rallied to assist. As Southern California begins its road to recovery, we know that these volunteers will continue their good work, helping their communities rebuild and return to normal over time. We are proud of your efforts—especially the hundreds of CERT and MRC volunteers who were actively involved in evacuations, shelter, and other urgent operations. Your contributions highlight the tremendous value of proper training and organization of volunteers before there is a need.

November is also a time for thanksgiving. From all of us at the headquarters office, we extend our sincere thanks to the firefighters, police, emergency medical services, volunteers, and everyone who works to make our homes and community safe.

Have a safe and happy holiday,

Brock D. Bierman  
Director, Community Preparedness Division  
Small State and Rural Advocate  
DHS/Federal Emergency Management Agency

## **Training & Affiliation: Keys to Success**

In an emergency like the recent California wildfires, even people who don't have training or haven't previously volunteered want to help. However, while spontaneous volunteers may have the best intentions, they often compromise the response effort due to a lack of training and skill. Citizen Corps addresses both the need for trained volunteers and affiliation during emergencies by offering a variety of ways for people of all abilities and interests to get involved in community preparedness.

If you are not already a member of a Citizen Corps Partner or Affiliate, the best way to help is to work through an established assistance program, such as those found here: <http://www.citizencorps.gov/programs/>.

Above all, do not travel to an affected area on your own. Basic essentials like food, water, medical supplies, and fuel are in short supply, and housing and infrastructure may have been damaged or destroyed. By volunteering with an affiliated organization, you can ensure that your efforts will be a welcome addition, and not an imposition on strained resources.



# November is Native American Indian Heritage Month!

Take time this month to recognize and honor the contributions of Native American firefighters and first responders in your area. To learn more about Native American Indian Heritage Month and to explore the culture of Native Americans from Alaska to Florida and on down through South America, there are many resources available on the Internet. A few good places to start include:

White House Proclamation

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/10/20071031-2.html>

U.S. Dep't of Health and Human Services Indian Health Service Heritage Site

<http://www.ihs.gov/PublicAffairs/Heritage/index.cfm>

The National Museum of the American Indian

<http://www.nmai.si.edu/>

## Highlights from Around the Country

### *Salt River Fire Department's Tribal CERT Expands Its Reach*

From humble beginnings, the Salt River Fire Department's Tribal CERT Program has expanded and continues to educate the community and raise awareness among its families and surrounding neighbors.

Fire Chief Dave Bunce brought the CERT Program to Salt River Tribal Community in 2003. Battalion Chief Kervin Miles, Captain Brian Smith, and Firefighter Don Oseletto delivered CERT Training to the community. Through collaboration with the State of Arizona (Embe Kugler, Gary White), the Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona (Rosalita Whitehair AzGITA), and the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Tribe, CERT continues to educate its members and branch out to other Native American communities. The positive process has connected people and overcome communications, traditions, and geographic issues that sometimes challenge other communities; the end result is fulfilling its purpose.

Salt River Fire Department hosted a CERT TtT (Train the Trainer) class in 2004 for 19 of 33 Tribes in Arizona; Navajo Nation Tribal Community Citizens Corps CERT training in 2006; and a Tribal Teen CERT TtT pilot program in May 2007 conducted by Eastern Michigan University for both Tribal and Tribal affiliated organizations throughout the United States. The experience has been positive, exciting and educational for all entities involved.

Spreading the program across the state with the local and other Tribes has been a worthwhile effort in reaching Tribal Governments. The future of teaching others to care for themselves and their communities is what makes the journey rewarding.

—submitted by: *Captain Brian Smith & Firefighter Don Oseletto*  
*Salt River Fire Department*

Joining a Citizen Corps Council in your area will help create the groundwork for the long-term security of our neighborhoods, our communities, and our Nation. Log on to [www.citizencorps.gov](http://www.citizencorps.gov) to find a Citizen Corps Council near you!



# Highlights from Around the Country

## *TOPOFF 4 Exercise*

Congratulations to Citizen Corps Councils and partners in Oregon and Arizona who participated in Top Officials 4 (TOPOFF 4) this October. In Gresham, OR, Citizen Corps, the Red Cross, and the County Animal Shelter worked together during the exercise scenario to establish special needs and pet shelters; they also sheltered simulated evacuees from a senior home in the area. Of note, the success of this shelter operation was based on prior joint planning. The Gresham and Portland Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) and Neighborhood

Watch Programs activated phone trees and canvassed their neighborhoods to distribute shelter-in-place and preparedness information. In addition, the Oregon Trail Chapter of the American Red Cross set up three shelters for evacuees.

In Arizona, Maricopa County Citizen Corps volunteers assisted in a variety of response activities, such as answering phones and performing administrative tasks in the emergency operations center. CERT members assisted with data entry and HAM radio operations in Phoenix and Chandler, AZ, keeping communications flowing when the telephone systems were overwhelmed. Local Citizen Corps members were also part of a pool of volunteers staffing the Arizona phone bank and Web site that provided information to community members during the disaster.

TOPOFF 4 is the fourth in a series of congressionally mandated, national preparedness exercises involving top officials at every level of government, as well as representatives from the international community and private sector. TOPOFF exercises are conducted every two years. Implementation of TOPOFF 5 will take place in 2009.

For more information on the TOPOFF 4 exercise, visit [http://www.dhs.gov/xprepresp/training/gc\\_1179350946764.shtm](http://www.dhs.gov/xprepresp/training/gc_1179350946764.shtm).

## *Arlington, VA, CERT Participates in School Shooter Exercise*

On Saturday, August 11, 25 Arlington Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members assisted county public safety agencies with a test of their response to a large-scale emergency. The exercise was held at Marymount University in Virginia, and simulated a campus shooting and hostage situation. CERT participants were not told of the specific scenario until the morning of the exercise in order to maintain a sense of realism for all participants. During the exercise, Arlington County Police Department and sheriff's office personnel responded to the scene by escorting "victims" and "witnesses" to a triage and treatment facility via ambulance, while other police officers negotiated with the "shooter" to release five hostages being held in an office. It was the first time the Arlington County's fire, police, and sheriff's department participated in a joint exercise. Congratulations to all participants.



*FEMA and Emergency Responders work at the Region 10 Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) Top Officials (TOPOFF) Exercise. Over 15,000 participants from federal, state and local agencies participated in the most comprehensive counterterrorism exercise to date. TOPOFF engages participants in the decision making processes they would face in a real world disaster—from public health concerns to communications issues among agencies and the media.*



## *Harris County, TX, Citizen Corps: Celebrating Five Years of Success*



*Judge Emmett and members of the Harris County Citizen Corps celebrate 5 years of partnerships and preparedness.*

The Harris County Citizen Corps Council was recently honored with the President's Call to Service Award for their thousands of hours of volunteer activity and instrumental role in community disaster preparedness and response. Harris County Citizen Corps is comprised of over 11,000 volunteers from different regions of the county and is one of the largest preparedness and response programs in the country. Covering the third most populous county in the U.S., the county includes the city of Houston as well as 32 smaller cities. The county is prone to flooding and ongoing hurricane and tropical storm threats and is also home to the fourth largest airport system in the country and the Port of Houston, the largest foreign waterborne port and leading center for the oil and gas industry.

Since its inception, Harris County Citizen Corps Council has made tremendous strides in community preparedness involving members of the first responder community (police, fire, rescue), elected officials, nonprofit community service organizations, faith-based organizations, public health institutions, and businesses. The Council has also established local branches of Citizen Corps programs including a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), Neighborhood Watch, Volunteers in Police Service Program (VIPS), and Fire Corps.

Throughout their five years of service, the Council has provided its community with a wide variety of training programs, including full-scale disaster response drills. The Council has also assisted with the development of an emergency hotline in multiple languages, created commercial partnerships to assist with supplies and donations, and created a highly frequented Web site to provide training and disaster information and allow volunteers to log hours and volunteer time, services, or equipment.

More information about Harris County Citizen Corps Council can be found on the Citizen Corps Web site at [http://www.citizencorps.gov/councils/cc\\_councils/harris.shtm](http://www.citizencorps.gov/councils/cc_councils/harris.shtm), or by visiting <http://www.harriscountycitizencorps.com>.



*Texas State Citizen Corps Manager, Regina Chapline presents a Certificate of Recognition from Governor Rick Perry to the Harris County Citizen Corps.*



# News & Events

## *Three-Month Community Outreach Outlook*

### **November**

- National American Indian Heritage Month
- November 4, 2007: Daylight Savings Time Ends
- November 11, 2007: Veterans' Day
- November 22, 2007: Thanksgiving Day

### **December**

- Winter Storm Awareness
- Holidays:
  - December 5-12, 2007: Hanukkah/Chanukah
  - December 25, 2007: Christmas
  - December 26, 2007: Kwanzaa Begins
  - December 31, 2007: New Year's Eve

### **January**

- January 1, 2007: New Year's Day
- National Volunteer Blood Donor Month
- January 15, 2007: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service
- Winter Storm Preparation

## *Radio Disney Summer Tour Educates Youth about Emergency Preparedness*

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's *Ready* Campaign and The Advertising Council would like to extend a big thank you to the Citizen Corps Councils that participated in the Radio Disney Move It! Summer tour. Twelve groups from Citizen Corps volunteered by handing out literature and interacting with kids across the country. The tour traveled to 42 malls during July and August and featured music, movement, and activities, as well as health, nutrition, and exercise information. Thanks for making the tour a great success!

### **Are You Ready?**

- Get informed about local emergency plans
- Learn how to identify hazards that affect your local area
- Develop and maintain an emergency communications plan
- Prepare a disaster supplies kit

# Editorial Policy

Citizen Corps welcomes your stories and best practices. If you would like to submit a story for consideration, please review our editorial policy.

- **Due Date:** All articles must be received by the 15th of the month to be considered for the next newsletter.
- **Length:** Articles should be between 50 – 150 words or one to three paragraphs.
- **Format:** Submit text as a Microsoft Word file using 12pt Times New Roman font or paste text directly into your email. Articles submitted as a PDF will not be used.
- **Previously Published Articles:** If you wish to submit a published article, you must obtain and include written permission from the publication to comply with copyright laws.
- **Photos:** If submitting a photo, attach it to your email as a JPG or TIF file. Include the names of people in the photo and a description of what they are doing and why. NOTE: Photos are assumed to be approved for publication.
- **Complete Information:** Be sure to include complete and accurate information including city and state, name of people or organizations involved, date of activity, contact information for author, and other relevant information.
- **Changes:** Citizen Corps retains the right to edit all stories for length, clarity, and accuracy.
- **Acceptance:** Submissions are selected based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to: activities of national interest, timeliness, space available, completeness of information, relevance, and other criteria.
- **Where to submit:** Please submit your articles to your regional program managers and copy your state Citizen Corps program manager.

For a listing of state contacts, please visit:

[www.citizencorps.gov/citizenCorps/statepoc.do](http://www.citizencorps.gov/citizenCorps/statepoc.do).

- *Regions 1, 2, and 3* (CT, DC, DE, MA, MD, ME, NJ, NH, NY, PA, RI, VA, VT, WV, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands)—Angela Heim: [Angela.Heim@dhs.gov](mailto:Angela.Heim@dhs.gov)
- *Regions 4 and 7* (AL, CO, FL, GA, KY, MS, MT, NC, ND, SC, SD, TN, UT, WY)—Stephanie Poore: [Stephanie.Poore@dhs.gov](mailto:Stephanie.Poore@dhs.gov)
- *Regions 5 and 7* (IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, OH, WI)—Jim Opoka: [James.Opoka@dhs.gov](mailto:James.Opoka@dhs.gov)
- *Regions 6, 9, and 10* (AK, AR, AZ, CA, ID, HI, LA, NM, NV, OK, TX, WA, Guam, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands)—Fred Bretsch: [Fred.Bretsch@dhs.gov](mailto:Fred.Bretsch@dhs.gov)
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