

FLORIDA

Highlights of State Council Activities

The Florida State Citizen Corps Council is managed by the Florida Division of Emergency Management. Florida Governor Jeb Bush and Volunteer Florida CEO Wendy Spencer have tasked the Florida Citizen Corps Task Force to remind the public to look after the vulnerable citizens in their communities, including citizens with special needs and/or disabilities. Each member of the Task Force has also been charged with the responsibility to highlight the Citizen Corps program through their own public outreach channels.

Highlights of State Activities

Public Education and Outreach

In coordination with the Florida Division of Emergency Management, the state Council also encourages and supports several new campaigns, including the *'My Safe Florida'* campaign, which urges citizens to "Be Informed. Be Prepared. Be Protected." The campaign assists citizens by providing information to help citizens prepare for, respond to, and recover from a disaster. The program also provides instruction on preparing a supply kit.

In 2005, Governor Jeb Bush recommended budget allocations to the Florida Legislature for the *'Culture of Preparedness'* campaign. This program allocates 97.3 million dollars toward a public education campaign, the Annual Hurricane Sales Tax Holiday, and a new Housing Retrofit Program. The public education campaign will raise public awareness and individual responsibility by emphasizing the importance of staying safe during the storm and being self-sufficient immediately following the storm. The Annual Hurricane Sales Tax Holiday, held the last week of May during Hurricane Preparedness Week, is a program that encourages citizens to take advantage of tax-free hurricane preparedness supplies. The Housing Retrofit Program is a grant program that allows for the increased protection of at least 10,000 homes, with priority given to low-income homes in windborne debris regions. Eligible improvements include securing openings, reinforcing roofs, and installing hurricane shutters.

Also in the works for 2006, is the *'Get a Plan!'* campaign. Coordinated by Lieutenant Governor Toni Jennings, the Florida Division of Emergency Management, and the Florida Broadcasters Association, this campaign will be targeted toward residents that are unprepared for a disaster. The campaign will include television and radio advertisements, billboards, and a new web-based family and business interactive planning tool located at www.FloridaDisaster.org.

Training and Exercises

Florida's CERT teams had a year full of accomplishments in 2005. In January, they started the year off by participating in the annual Florida CERT Conference and Drill. Florida Citizen Corps volunteers and CERT team members also participated in the Statewide Hurricane Exercise that was held in May to hold drills, equipment checks, and contact team members. In September,

six CERT teams participated in the 2005 International Extrication Competition, held annually by the International Rescue and Emergency Care Association (IRECA), and the Transportation Emergency Response Committee (TERC). Six teams from Boca Raton, Coral Springs, Deerfield Beach, Hallandale Beach, Hernando County, and Miramar were evaluated on Disaster Preparations, Search and Rescue, Medical Triage, and Incident Command.

Volunteer Programs and Support

In 2005, Florida had over 88,000 volunteers participating in formal Citizen Corps programs around the state. Over 1,700 public education and outreach activities were coordinated by local Citizen Corps Councils. Florida Citizen Corps also trained over 4,200 new CERT members, forming eighty seven new teams. The Jacksonville and Orlando MRCs participate actively in Florida Citizen Corps Task Force activities. All Citizen Corps partner programs provide representation at Florida Citizen Corps Task Force meetings.

Florida Citizen Corps has made great strides in incorporating youth and teens into Citizen Corps initiatives. In 2005, approximately fifty Boy Scouts from chapters around the state volunteered their time, distributing FEMA information to disaster-stricken residents. Also on the rise is the amount of Florida's teen CERT members. North Port High School in Sarasota County currently has upwards of 600 students that are certified members of their school's CERT team. The Hillsborough County School District has also trained 150 faculty/student CERT members. VolunteerLEON also participates in Florida's Citizen Corps by providing valuable volunteer opportunities for the youth of Leon County.

In addition, the Governor's Commission on Community Service and Volunteerism, Volunteer Florida has actively promoted Citizen Corps initiatives. Through Volunteer Florida's extraordinary efforts 112,616 volunteers donated 4.7 million hours during the 2005 Hurricane Season.

Support for Hurricane Katrina Response

Florida Citizen Corps supported response and recovery efforts from Hurricane Katrina in their own state and also assisted with recovery efforts in both Mississippi and Louisiana. These efforts included nearly 200 volunteers actively engaged in supporting disaster response and almost 100 more ready to serve. Florida's Citizen Corps volunteers provided a wide range of support services, including deployment to Mississippi, local damage assessments, support in local emergency operations centers, radio communications support. Florida Citizen Corps also distributed food and water, provided other support function, and assisted with local debris removal.

National Preparedness Month

During National Preparedness Month, the City of Orlando Medical Reserve Corps and the Orange County Citizen Corps collaborated to host a Disaster Preparedness Fair. All Citizen Corps partner programs were represented, with each of them providing family and business preparedness information and an informational presentation outlining their respective program, and how citizens can get involved. Additionally, the City of Deerfield Beach held their "Safety Night Out," with representatives from Deerfield Citizen Corps and Broward County Sheriff's Office and Fire Rescue. Citizen Corps representatives provided cribbing and medical operations demonstrations to attendees. The "Safety Night Out" was a great success, circulating valuable

information to citizens about the safety resources that are currently being used in their jurisdiction.