

## **LOUISIANA**

### **Highlights of State Council Activities**

Louisiana State Citizen Corps Council is run by the Governor Kathleen Blanco's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. Currently, Louisiana is revitalizing its State Citizen Corps Council. The State Coordinator and Program Manager are encouraging the local Citizen Corps Councils and CERT teams to train for sheltering operations in the near term.

After the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, many parishes are in the process of rebuilding their Citizen Corps Councils and Programs. Orleans, Plaquemine, Jefferson and St. Bernard Parish are developing a regional Citizen Corps Council, hoping to strengthen citizen awareness through a group effort. CERT training is the primary focus with training scheduled to resume in Metro New Orleans in June 2006.

### **Highlights of State Activities**

#### **Public Education and Outreach**

Once a month, Caddo-Bossier Citizen Corps conducted CERT recruitment with "Wally the Weather Turtle" at area hardware stores and outlet centers. Training for the new CERT members included using previous volunteers as victims for refresher training. Bossier Parish Community College hosted a guest speaker in their political science classes to better prepare college students for emergencies. From these classes, some students volunteered to be CERT members and assist other college students in preparing for emergencies.

#### **Training and Exercises**

Prior to Hurricane Season 2005, Louisiana Citizen Corps was training CERT teams to deal with Parish or Regional incidents. CERT training is now focused on Regional as well as statewide training of citizens. Local Parish Citizen Corps Councils around the state are working to regionalize training, utilizing the 9 Emergency Response Regions mandated by state law. Region 1, which includes Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines & St. Bernard Parishes, has restarted their training program and graduated the first class of 32 new CERT team members in July 2006.

#### **Volunteer Programs and Support**

There are three Medical Reserve Corps programs in Louisiana, but a fourth is about to be added in Lake Charles, Louisiana. Additionally, local Citizen Corps Councils are interested in expanding MRC support in their areas along with VIPS and Neighborhood Watch programs and an increase in active programs as well as the number of programs overall is expected.

#### **Support for Hurricane Katrina Response**

Although Louisiana's own communities were impacted by tragedy, Louisiana Citizen Corps volunteers' perseverance and volunteer spirit was clearly evident through their demonstrated efforts to rebuild. Citizen Corps volunteers worked with Community Relations by visiting shelters in the parishes to provide evacuees with updated information and to help register evacuees for assistance.

### **National Preparedness Month**

Currently, the State Council is developing the National Preparedness Month program in conjunction with the local Parish Councils. Plans include a press conference with Governor Blanco and a statewide fifth anniversary memorial service for those affected by the September 11th terrorist attacks. Local Councils and State Agencies will be distributing booklets on preparing homes, businesses and workspaces for all hazards emergencies. The goal of Preparedness month is meant to remind all Louisianans, "While Louisiana may be hypersensitive to hurricanes today, we must be prepared for any type of emergency."