

NEW JERSEY

Highlights of State Council Activities

The New Jersey Citizen Corps Program is coordinated by the State Citizen Corps Council and the New Jersey State Police, Office of Emergency Management. Working in partnership with county and local community and civic leaders, New Jersey Citizen Corps has established a nation-leading network of 178 Councils serving the entire population of the state.

Highlights of State Activities

Public Education and Outreach

Working together with NJN Public Television Network, New Jersey Citizen Corps has produced public service announcements for Citizens Corps, Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and Neighborhood Watch programs to disseminate the Citizen Corps message to the public and provide volunteer opportunities. New Jersey Citizen Corps has announced a new "Join Our Team" initiative to attract volunteers to the program. Through a partnership with the NFL New York Football Giants to expand and promote this new initiative with middle school-aged children, trading cards were developed that feature Giants players on the cards with important messages on the back about being prepared, safety and Citizen Corps goals and objectives.

New Jersey Citizen Corps has been actively recruiting the private sector to participate in Citizen Corps initiatives. As a result, the United Water Company, Prudential, UBS Paine-Webber, NJ Natural Gas, and the Mitre Corporation, as well as a number of our Atlantic City Casinos now have workplace CERT teams in their office buildings.

Training and Exercises

In April of 2005, the Department of Homeland Security conducted TOPOFF 3, a full-scale exercise simulating a bioterrorism attack. The exercise had participation throughout New Jersey, as well as the State of Connecticut, the United Kingdom and Canada. Citizen Corps volunteers played a major role in this event with over 1,000 New Jersey CERT and Medical Reserve Corps volunteers providing staffing for the Emergency Operation Center and Points of Dispensation Sites (PODS), and participating as victims.

Volunteer Programs and Support

The state's CERT program saw extensive growth of the program in 2005 with over 7,000 New Jersey volunteers and CERT members by the end of the year. New Jersey trained 1,000 state employees in CERT Training from 25 state agencies. The state Citizen Corps Office also now has 722 CERT instructors/program managers who have completed the CERT Train-the-Trainer program. To expand its outreach efforts, New Jersey Citizen Corps provided the course in Spanish, which resulted in the development of CERT programs in the Hispanic communities of Paterson and Jersey City.

This year the state focused on equipping a fleet of 44 utility trailers with emergency response and medical supplies to deploy to CERTs across the state. These trailers have been strategically placed in urban areas and in counties where proactive CERT programs are ready to respond to any type of disaster in their community or region.

New Jersey's Neighborhood Watch program has experienced extreme growth in 2005 by expanding upon the basic Neighborhood Watch crime prevention theme to include Disaster Preparedness and Terrorism Awareness training to its volunteers. New Jersey Citizen Corps has developed a Corporate Watch Program, modeled after the Neighborhood Watch initiative, but geared to the workplace. Many corporations have signed on to this initiative to receive the training.

In partnership with the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and 21 county health officials, New Jersey has over 4,000 MRC volunteers. These volunteers have been trained and equipped with identification vests, baseball caps and medical supplies in order to support their mission. Additionally, the state will be providing a fleet of new utility trailers outfitted with various medical supplies and command post equipment in a regional deployment strategy, similar to the initiative to strategically place CERT response trailers in the state.

Working with the New Jersey State Police Community Partnerships Bureau, New Jersey Citizen Corps has revitalized its Safety Patrol initiative. Together with the American Automobile Association (AAA), a new curriculum was developed that added disaster preparedness, CERT and terrorism awareness to the existing Safety Patrol program. The state Citizen Corps Office also launched a new Chaplain Corps Program and is providing equipment and support to clergy volunteers. Currently, the New Jersey State Police, Newark City Police, and Burlington City Police Departments have begun Chaplain Corps Programs under the VIPS banner.

Working together with the New Jersey Division of Fire Safety, New Jersey Citizen Corps is developing protocols for Fire Corps volunteers. Fire Corps volunteers will be assisting fire departments across the state with administrative and clerical duties and other tasks as assigned to assist their respective community.

Support for Hurricane Katrina Response

When Hurricane Katrina devastated the States of Louisiana and Mississippi, New Jersey CERT members that had been previously deployed to the Gulf Coast in 2004 were activated again to resume their duties as Community Relations officers. During floods that plagued New Jersey in April and September 2005, CERT members were activated in the counties of Bergen, Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, Hunterdon, Morris, Passaic, Sussex, and Warren to assist with community relations and shelter operations efforts. In Monmouth County, CERT volunteers were activated to assist with an Amber Alert for a missing girl, who was later found to be a murder victim. In several other occasions, Citizen Corps volunteers assisted in searching for missing senior citizens who were subsequently safely returned to their loved ones.

National Preparedness Month

Local events were held across the state in recognition of National Preparedness Month. For instance, in Pennsville, New Jersey, the local Citizen Corps Council hosted "We Need To Be Ready – Family Security Matters," a family emergency preparedness day where attendees learned to make family emergency preparedness plans and supply kits and received valuable local emergency preparedness information.