

## **TEXAS**

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

Statewide, the Texas Citizen Corps Advisory Council supports Citizen Corps initiatives by encouraging local communities to work with Citizen Corps Program Partners and recommending the use of service volunteerism as a way to prepare the public for all types of emergencies and disasters. An essential part of the Texas approach to homeland security is regional planning and implementation of prevention, protection, response and recovery measures by local officials through the state's network of regional Councils of Governments (COGs). In some instances, this involves taking the lead in the implementation of Citizen Corps on a regional basis.

In 2005, the Governor's Office and State Administrative Agency significantly increased the base funding for Citizen Corps in Texas by reallocating over \$600,000 from other homeland security funds to ensure additional funds were available to local jurisdictions interested in Citizen Corps.

The Texas Citizen Corps Program sponsored the first annual Texas Citizen Corps Conference in Houston in June of 2005. This was the only Citizen Corps Conference in Region VI. The conference attracted approximately 250 people from across Texas and 13 surrounding states. Leaders from the national and state level provided updates on the different Citizen Corps programs. In addition, many volunteers also presented information on their local programs. Attendees from across the nation learned what Texas was doing to be safer and better prepared.

The Texas Homeland Security Strategic Plan was released in November 2005 by Governor Rick Perry. In his cover letter, Governor Perry stated that "Texas has one of the largest and most active Citizen Corps in the nation; a testament to the fact that Texans believe that protecting our homeland is the duty of all Americans." The goals of the Texas Homeland Security Strategic Plan intricately involve different aspects of the Texas Citizen Corps Program over the next five years. Some objectives specifically listed in the plan include a strategy for a statewide media campaign to raise the awareness of Texas Citizen Corps and general plans for expansion of the Texas Citizen Corps Program through increased citizen participation.

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

In February, 2006, the Concho Valley Citizen Corps, the West Central Texas Citizen Corps, the National Weather Service and Midland, Inc. kicked off the All Hazards Radio Campaign with press conferences in Abilene and San Angelo. These two regional Citizen Corps Councils worked with the National Weather Service to create disaster preparedness brochures to distribute to the public. The campaign highlighted the benefits of having an All Hazards Radio and radios were available for purchase at reduced rates at several retail outlets and the Internet.

#### **Training and Exercises**

To date, Texas has trained and equipped approximately 12,000 people into 249 Community Emergency Response Teams, 67 Citizen Corps Councils, 44 Fire Corps Programs, 19 Medical Reserve Corps, 75 Volunteers in Police Service Programs, and 427 Registered Neighborhood Watch Programs. If each of those volunteers gave at least 8 hours of their time to serving their community during the past year, at the current volunteer rate of \$18.03 per hour, the value of volunteer time would reach \$1.73 million which is \$1.02 million more than what Texas was awarded in FY 2005 Citizen Corps Funds. These Citizen Corps volunteers not only helped Texas, but assisted the nation during last year's devastating hurricanes.

After tornadoes ripped through Collin County, the McKinney CERT, which is part of the Collin County Citizen Corps Council, was called into action to assist local emergency management officials in the search for missing people. McKinney CERT also sponsors an annual CERT Olympics, in which CERT Teams from across the state have an opportunity to compete and practice their skills.

### **Volunteer Programs and Support**

The Hays County Citizen Corps Council began partnering with their local Red Cross Chapter after their community was affected by severe flooding in 1998, 2001 and again in 2002. They determined they needed more "island" shelters, and they began worked with the local Red Cross to provide shelter operations and mass care training for their volunteers. The Hays County Citizen Corps is fully integrated in the county emergency structure and has many teams and trailers that provide full coverage to the citizens of their county. The Hays County CERT was recognized at the National CERT Conference in May 2006 for their organizational efforts.

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

During the 2005 Hurricane Season, over 6,300 Citizen Corps volunteers in communities across Texas worked in the shelters that housed thousands of evacuees. Citizen Corps volunteers performed hundreds of tasks, which included working in emergency operations centers, local shelters, providing water to stranded motorists during evacuations, assisting local Red Cross and Salvation Army workers, and numerous other tasks.

On September 1, 2005, Harris County Judge Robert Eckels activated the Harris County Citizen Corps to prepare for, support and maintain the largest shelter operation in U.S. history. The Harris County Citizen Corps mobilized over 60,000 spontaneous volunteers to help maintain a shelter for more than 27,000 people for three weeks. Judge Eckels stated "Through the partnerships established in the Harris County Citizen Corps, tens of thousands of volunteers showed the nation and the world the true meaning of the Spirit of Texas." The Harris County Citizen Corps Manager was named ABC News "Person of the Week" as a result of the coordination and organization of the Harris County Citizen Corps and their service during Hurricane Katrina.

### **National Preparedness Month**

To commemorate National Preparedness Month, the Remember 9/11 Community Disaster Preparedness Day was held in San Antonio. The Alamo Regional Citizen Corps Council, in conjunction with the San Antonio Area Red Cross, Volunteer Organization in Active Disaster (VOAD), United Way 2-1-1, Alamo Area Council of Government, Bexar County, and the City of San Antonio, joined forces to put together this daylong event. The event featured many first

responder demonstrations, a CERT Rodeo, Bike Safety Rodeo, Rescue Demonstrations, many child friendly activities to learn about safety preparedness, and special appearances by safety mascots, Sparky the Fire Dog, McGruff the Crime Dog, and others.