

VIRGIN ISLANDS

Highlights of State Council Activities

The U.S. Virgin Islands Citizen Corps Office is housed in the Territory's Emergency Management Agency. The territory has two strong Citizen Corps Councils, one in the District of St. Croix and the other in the District of St. Thomas. Both Councils are chaired by leadership from each island's Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD). Since their inception, these two Councils have helped Citizen Corps Partner Programs prosper on the island territory.

Highlights of State Activities

Public Education and Outreach

The U.S. Virgin Islands Citizen Corps Office focused its outreach efforts on planning two Citizen Corps conferences for July 2006. One conference was planned in the District of St. Croix and the other in the District of St. Thomas. These conferences allow Council members, Citizen Corps volunteers and program managers, and CERT instructors to come together to learn more about safeguarding themselves, their families and communities. Training opportunities were provided at the conferences, held on weekends so that volunteers who work during the week will have an opportunity to attend. At the conclusion of the conference, each volunteer received a new identification card that describes the training they completed to date and includes an expiration date. In order for volunteers to maintain their identification card's validity, they will then need to complete additional training prior to their expiration date.

Training and Exercises

The Territorial Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program has grown through a partnership with local hotels to provide staff with CERT training. To date, 77 participants have completed the training, including 40 staff members of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel.

As part of the planning for the two Citizen Corps Conferences in July 2006, exercises were scheduled to test the training volunteers received. This provided volunteers with the opportunity to receive more training and test their capabilities.

Volunteer Programs and Support

The Virgin Islands' Neighborhood Watch program provides a unique infrastructure that brings together local officials, law enforcement and citizens to protect the territories' communities. The Virgin Islands Police Department has been working together with community members to enhance the Neighborhood Watch program. The Virgin Islands Emergency Management Agency, in partnership with the Citizen Corps Councils, has placed particular emphasis this year on developing CERT in the neighborhoods through the partnership of the police departments in St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix. The program also hopes to strengthen and revitalize existing

Neighborhood Watch groups and establish new groups in cooperation with local law enforcement agencies.

Throughout the territory's five islands, 820 residents have completed CERT training and are organized in 11 teams. The program has also expanded across jurisdictional boundaries by partnering with the Bahamas and the British Virgin Islands to provide CERT training to residents.

The Virgin Islands' Volunteers in Police Service program focuses on involving youth in volunteer opportunities at local law enforcement agencies. In doing so, they have implemented a program called 'Guardian Angels', which is a program providing these opportunities. Through partnerships with the Adventure Troops and the Boy Scouts, youth are engaged in assisting and learning from law enforcement agencies. Through a partnership with the Civil Air Patrol, youth are learning about aerospace and other new opportunities.

Plans are also in progress to develop an MRC program to serve the Virgin Islands.

Support for Hurricane Katrina Response

Although the Virgin Islands did not utilize Citizen Corps volunteers in the response efforts to Hurricane Katrina, program managers used this opportunity to understand what volunteer resources would be available during an emergency.

National Preparedness Month

Due to the urgent need to educate citizens continually on the risks posed to the Territory, citizens are provided preparedness information and offered volunteer opportunities throughout the year.