

ALASKA

Highlights of State Council Activities

The Alaska State Citizen Corps Council was established as a subcommittee of the State Emergency Response Commission (SERC). The State Council has developed and implemented the state strategy for assisting the establishment and operation of local Citizen Corps Councils. The SERC finance committee finalized the distribution of Homeland Security Grants funds based on recommendations from the State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. The SERC met three times throughout the year, while the Citizens Corps subcommittee chairperson was actively engaged in coordinating Council programs.

Highlights of State Activities

Public Education & Outreach

In December 2005, the State of Alaska launched an Emergency Preparedness Poster Contest to educate all elementary school children on the importance of preparing for, and knowing how to react to emergencies within their homes or communities. Students in kindergarten through sixth grade across the state first learned about the ways to prepare for emergencies and then drew pictures depicting a way to prepare for or respond to an emergency. The contest was judged by First Lady Nancy Murkowski and the Department of Homeland Security & Emergency Management Director.

The Shungnak Citizens Corps initiated its first outreach program to the Village of Ambler, the first step towards the goal of interfacing with all villages in a 100-mile radius in order to expand the Citizen Corps Program. Project Lifesaver was introduced to Alaska with guidance from the Anchorage Auxiliary Search Team. This program, which originated in 1999 in Virginia, uses transmitters to assist caregivers of patients with Alzheimer's and other disorders to locate their charges should they wander away and become lost. Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members have been trained in this program, which will ultimately be available statewide.

Training & Exercises

Since 2004, CERT training has been provided to high school students in the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program at Colony High School in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough's core population area. Due to the enthusiastic reaction from students, the school administration, and teachers, CERT was integrated into the JROTC curriculum at Colony High School. A grant from the Fraternal Order of Alaska State Troopers assisted in providing protective gear and tools for Colony's CERT program. In addition to basic CERT skills, training in avalanche and wilderness rescue was included.

Many Alaskan communities and agencies participated in the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management's coordinated statewide disaster and terrorism exercise, 2005 Alaska

Shield/Northern Edge. During this exercise, the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) conducted a mass casualty event with 230 volunteers. The MOA Citizen Corps Council sought and found people who were blind, deaf, spoke languages other than English, or had various physical disabilities. After the event, the volunteer manager sent post-event briefings to all volunteers, cataloged volunteer evaluations, and compiled all event information into a format to be used for future exercises.

Volunteer Programs & Support

Matanuska-Susitna Borough VOAD (Volunteer Organizations Assisting in Disasters) was formed in November 2005. Since then, representatives of about 20 area churches and volunteer organizations have met monthly to discuss preparedness and disaster volunteer needs. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough has worked with the local office of public health to provide training and volunteers for pandemic flu mass-dispensing clinics, should they be needed. Each of the member groups has requested CERT training for their volunteers. This led to the formation of the Willow area CERT team and is continuing with Latter-Day Saints Church team training.

The Kenai's Fire Corps program has partnered with the Sprucebark Beetle Mitigation Program to present Wildfire Protection Planning programs to Peninsula communities.

The State Council has partnered with the Bristol Bay Borough Health Department to adapt CERT for remote tribal villages by partnering with the Bristol Bay Borough Health Department.

Support for Hurricane Katrina Response:

Alaska's local Citizen Corps Councils provided support for response efforts and in the statewide focus on preparedness campaigns. Councils worked with Red Cross chapters throughout the state collecting and organizing donated items to be shipped to Mississippi and Louisiana. The Alaska Citizen Corps worked with the governor, media, and other partners to reach citizens with a strong preparedness message. The Governor of Alaska encouraged residents to be better prepared and promoted Citizen Corps as the avenue to get involved.

National Preparedness Month

While a number of communities published news articles and preparedness information in conjunction with National Preparedness Month, the Kenai Peninsula Borough went a step further in helping communities become better prepared. Disaster caches were stocked and pre-positioned in a number of remote communities on the Peninsula. The Borough developed Memoranda of Agreement for disaster cache use, maintenance, and stocking. Each of the communities also hosted, or planned to host, CERT training.