

ILLINOIS

Highlights of State Council Activities

The Illinois Citizen Corps Council serves as a committee to the Illinois Terrorism Task Force (ITTF), the state's homeland security preparedness body designated by Governor Rod R. Blagojevich. The Illinois Citizen Corps Council has served in this capacity since June 2002 and is comprised of approximately 20 different federal, state, local, and Citizen Corps affiliate agencies or organizations. It meets every other month and reports its activities to the ITTF on a monthly basis.

Areas of strategic focus at the state level are twofold. Firstly, the State Council serves as a link between the 80 local Citizen Corps Councils in Illinois that were formed by the end of 2005 and secondly, it disseminates grant funding to them. For the last four years, the Illinois Citizen Corps Council has hosted an annual Citizen Corps Conference to educate and train local Councils. The Council also serves as the conduit between federal partners and local Councils to serve in capacities needed. In addition, the State Council makes recommendations on the dissemination of grant funding to the ITTF and Governor. From federal fiscal year 2002 to 2005, Citizen Corps Program funding was determined by a baseline formula. Starting in 2006, the funding strategy shifted to continuing a small baseline amount of funding, but also allocating higher amounts to new Councils, as well as, to those that have met performance goals. Other funding within the Homeland Security Grant Program has also been utilized on the state and local level to strengthen the Citizen Corps program.

Highlights of State Activities

Public Education and Outreach

Many new ideas for public education and outreach have been developed in Illinois over the last year. The Illinois Citizen Corps Council developed pocket-size brochures that included emergency preparedness information as well as a place for people to record their own information. The State Council made these brochures available to all local Councils.

On the local level, many jurisdictions are using their programs to develop and send print and electronic newsletters to their citizens containing emergency preparedness information. Two particularly good examples come from the Cities of Aurora and Naperville, both with populations exceeding 100,000.

Public service announcements that focus on emergency preparedness were developed. Arlington Heights and Springfield both had their own announcements aired on cable access channels and other media outlets.

Training and Exercises

The Illinois Citizen Corps Council recently piloted and subsequently adopted an additional day of training for the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) course. The Illinois Emergency Management Agency delivers the CERT course nearly quarterly and the program's growth fueled the need for a management module, now that many local jurisdictions have CERT programs. An eight-hour session on managing a CERT program is now part of the curriculum.

In addition, the Village of Palatine hosted a CERT Challenge to further exercise CERT teams in the Chicago area.

Volunteer Programs and Support

The Illinois Citizen Corps Council developed the idea of having a team of experienced disaster volunteer managers at the state's disposal, should an event lead to an overwhelming number of volunteers. The Volunteer Management Support Team (VMST) concept was developed by the American Red Cross of Greater Chicago in conjunction with the YMCA. Currently, there are eight team members ready to be called upon if needed. The team has been exercised in tabletop scenarios, and its first large-scale test was part of the statewide exercise in early 2006.

One example of local volunteer program partnership includes the DuPage County Citizen Corps Council. DuPage County serves as a mentor to all of the local Citizen Corps Councils within DuPage County; much like the State Council does to all local Illinois Councils. In addition, DuPage County has an excellent program using Citizen Corps volunteers to assist in the distribution of the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS).

Support for Hurricane Katrina Response

In Illinois, about 12 Citizen Corps jurisdictions reported that they assisted during the Hurricane Katrina response. Volunteers worked on an Adopt-a-Parish program by collecting needed items and transporting them to affected areas, including Lake Charles and Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Additionally, they arranged for school supplies from the local Wal-Mart to be delivered to Harris County, Texas. Citizen Corps volunteers provided clothing for each evacuee residing in an adopted community and assisted local Red Cross chapters in preparation for the arrival of evacuees.

National Preparedness Month

Governor Rod R. Blagojevich proclaimed September as National Preparedness Month, for the second year in a row, and encouraged citizens as well as local units of government to take an active role in preparing themselves for an emergency situation. In September, the Governor also announced that, as a lesson from Katrina, Illinois would host a statewide exercise in early 2006 to test the state's response system and integrate the message of Citizen Corps and community preparedness.