

Massachusetts Medical Reserve Corps



Fall 2008

Boston and Region 4 MRC Units Participate in 4th of July Patient Tracking Drill

While thousands of Boston residents enjoyed the Fourth of July concert and fireworks show on the Charles River Esplanade, Boston MRC volunteers and Emergency Medical Service professionals conducted their own practice with the Metro Boston Patient Tracking System.

In event of a public emergency, public safety responders need to track patients receiving care. The Metro Boston Patient Tracking System is a secure web based application designed to collect demographic and health care information on individuals involved in a Mass Casualty Incident (MCI) and to track them through the health care system, from the field to their release from care. The purpose of the system is to ensure accurate documentation of care provided, account for all patients involved in an incident, and coordinate response and management of the disaster across agencies and jurisdictions.

The system helps incident managers track the medical response to an MCI. Within the application, they can view in real time the number of patients being treated at each location, their triage status and the number of patients who have been treated and released. This will help them make critical decisions, such as determining where to allocate additional resources. The system can also be used for family reunification as coordinators can receive real time locations for each person receiving care.

continued on page 4

★ What is MRC?

The Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) system was founded by the federal government shortly after 9/11. The national system brings together people who have health care skills with citizen volunteers. MRC units are trained and prepared to respond as a team to emergencies in their communities. The members may provide education, outreach and various health services throughout the year.



MRC volunteers worked with EMS professionals to test the Metro Boston Patient Tracking System.



Thousands attended the 4th of July concert on the Esplanade. The large numbers provided an excellent opportunity to test patient tracking capabilities.

www.mamedicalreservecorps.org

MRC Unit Leaders Meet for November Regional Conference

On November 20 and 21, 2008, representatives from Medical Reserve Corps units around the state will attend the MRC Regional Conference in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Attendees will meet at the Wentworth by the Sea Hotel for multiple networking opportunities, trainings and speaker presentations. The Conference will focus on both public health and emergency preparedness.

“This New England MRC Conference is designed for unit leaders to learn vital, current information, network with their peers, and return home with a myriad of helpful resources and ideas to enhance their community teams,” said Region 1 Coordinator, Jennifer Frenette.

The first day of the conference will feature a welcoming address from Michael Milner, Regional Health Administrator for Region 1 covering Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont. After Regional and National updates from Ms. Frenette and Commander Brad Austin, attendees will enjoy a networking lunch and a keynote presentation from FEMA Region 1 representative, Susan Novak. Her address will discuss the emergency response to Hurricane Ike.

There will be breakout sessions in the afternoon with multiple workshops for MRC unit leaders to choose from. One breakout will feature Jonathan O’Dell, director of the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Mr. O’Dell will lead a workshop on improving communication with hearing impaired citizens during an emergency. Mr. O’Dell will be followed by Ms. Novak, who will discuss building partnerships between the public and private sector in emergency management.

Another breakout will feature Charles Ishikawa’s train-the-trainer course on preparing MRC units for Points of Distribution (POD) Operations. This course will prepare MRC leaders to operate an Emergency Dispensing Site and distribute emergency supplies to their community.



MRC Unit representatives from the New England Region will attend the Annual Regional Conference at the Wentworth by the Sea Hotel in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Finally, the third breakout will include Sam Schaffzin, MRC National Office, and Sandy Collins, Upper Merrimack Valley MRC, leading a workshop for new MRC leaders. New MRC unit leaders will be able to learn from experienced coordinators how to build and maintain successful and responsive MRC units.

On Friday, Carmine Centrella, Public Safety and Homeland Security Regional Planner, will lead an interactive all-New England table top exercise. Participants will respond to a simulated disaster to develop best practices in emergency response.

The New England Regional Conference will have the highest attendance of any regional MRC conference with approximately 100 MRC unit leaders and coordinators currently registered. “In our small corner of the US, we naturally assist each other in times of need; we should do the same in daily activities that affect our public’s health and preparedness,” said Ms. Frenette. “By building relationships now, New England’s resiliency will continue to be second to none.”

Western MA MRC Units Test Communication Systems in June Drill

On June 5, 2008 The Medical Reserve Corps Units in Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire counties of western Massachusetts participated in a multi-partner communication drill to test communication and activation systems. All 15 MRC Units in western MA participated with an estimated 840 volunteers. The drill was sponsored by the four County Health Coalitions.

The communication drill was part of a five year plan to test the capabilities and capacity for risk communication in Region 1. Western Massachusetts MRC units partnered

with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and emergency management directors to design a drill to activate MEMA’s web Emergency Operations Center (EOC). MEMA’s web EOC is a crisis information management software system that delivers real-time data to emergency managers and first responders. The software facilitated closer interoperability between public health officials, EMS and MRC volunteers.

The test of communication systems included activation of the Health & Homeland Alert Network (HHAN). The Health & Homeland Alert Network is a statewide directory of key emergency response personnel organized by role,

continued on page 4

Upper Merrimack Valley MRC holds Training Day

On September 20, 2008, the Upper Merrimack Valley MRC held a training day on the UMASS Lowell campus. The event served as a forum to bring together both members and instructors to learn valuable information and better prepare for a future deployment. MRC volunteers were invited to Weed Hall to participate in multiple training courses offered in morning and afternoon sessions. Participants could choose between five courses: START Triage, WMD Radiological/Nuclear Awareness, Behavioral Health Overview, Hands-on Skills workshop and Incident Command System 100.

The courses were applicable to many different skill levels and covered a wide array of topics. The START Triage course explained the purpose of triage and its application for first responders. The WMD Radiological/Nuclear Awareness course presented an overview for first responders to a Weapons of Mass Destruction emergency, focusing on the basics of radiation, possible health effects, hazard identification and proper notification procedures. The Hands-on Skills Workshop allowed nurses to brush up on their current skills and develop confidence in performing inoculations, Mantoux testing and IV procedures in a deployment.

Volunteers could also take the Introduction to Incident Command System. The course taught participants the nationally recognized Incident Command System and the National Incident Management System. Finally, participants could attend the Behavioral Health Overview course and discuss the potential psychological impacts of a disaster on the public and first responders.

The training was coordinated and planned by UMV MRC director Sandy Collins and unit coordinator Nancy Burns. "Our instructors were willing to provide the training for free and felt satisfied that the unit was better prepared as a result of the trainings they received," said Ms. Burns. "Members were impressed with the professionalism of the unit and caliber of the courses. They remarked how glad they were to be a part of this unit."

The training was a resounding success, with approximately 70 volunteers attending. Publicity for the event spurred recruitment efforts as the Upper Merrimack Valley MRC gained several new volunteers at the Training day. Volunteers were encouraged to network and meet other members at a lunch that included informal discussions about the importance of preparedness, unit news updates and future deployment opportunities. For fun, the lunch also featured a raffle as well as a contest for the largest number of correct answers to the MRC crossword puzzle.



Joe Guarnera presented the classroom version of the ICS-100 FEMA course, which introduces concepts of the Incident Command System. MRC members are encouraged to complete classes in ICS and NIMS (National Incident Management System), to strengthen their unit's level of NIMS compliance.



MRC Volunteers enjoyed a networking lunch that included an MRC overview as well as a raffle and crossword puzzle contest.

Patient Tracking Drill, continued from page 1

The Fourth of July offered the perfect opportunity to test and improve this system. Due to factors such as the heat, walking and alcohol consumption, medical tents treat 300 to 600 patients each year. For the past three years, Boston EMS has practiced using the patient tracking system at the Fourth of July event along the Esplanade and made adjustments as necessary to improve system performance.

MRC volunteers worked at medical tents where any patients receiving care were entered into the system through handheld computers. Volunteers gave each patient a wristband, which had a scan-able unique barcode ID, and entered their triage status, age and gender into a

screen on the handheld. The system also captures whether a patient has been discharged or is being transported, allowing for real time disposition status reports.

The Boston and Region 4A MRC units provided volunteer support for the Fourth of July program. Through these experiences, volunteers were afforded an opportunity to develop excellent working relationships with EMS professionals and will be well prepared to assist with the tracking system in the event of an emergency. "This was another wonderful opportunity for the MRC and Boston EMS to partner and it also gave a great training opportunity to our MRC volunteers," said Region 4A coordinator Liisa Jackson. "I look forward to future collaborations with Boston EMS."

The Medical Reserve Corps is co-sponsoring the 2009 Integrated Medical, Public Health, Preparedness and Response Training Summit with the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS), the Emergency System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals (ESAR-VHP), and the Office of Force Readiness and Deployment (OFRD). The Training Summit will be held April 4-8, 2009 in Dallas, TX. The new website address for information regarding this training event is www.HHSTrainingSummit.org.

June Drill, continued from page 2

such as medical professional, public health official or public safety officer. The HHAN can be used to send out semi-automated alerts that are compatible with telephones, email, fax, and pagers. This alert system is used as a tool to notify local officials and volunteer partners about a wide range of health and public safety issues from power outages to food contamination, bioterrorism or infrastructure-related incidents.

MRC Unit Coordinators utilized the Western MA MRC website, www.wmmrc.org, telephone trees and MRC unit databases to communicate the drill message. Some MRC Units activated their community's Connect-CTY which is an alert service that can personalize voice and text messages to local residents and businesses in a matter of minutes.

Planning for the second annual communication drill began several months prior to the actual drill. Partners in the regional drill included: MRC Units, MDPH, MEMA, MDPH/HHAN, hospital preparedness managers, amateur radio operators (HAM), local boards of health and local health directors. The regional communication drill included cities, mid-sized and small rural communities.

Kathleen Conley Norbut, Region 1 MRC Coordinator conducted a meeting to recap the drill and said, "The volunteers were very enthusiastic and the training helped them to feel like they were part of an integrated team."



For More Information

or to view a video about Massachusetts MRC units, please visit the website at:
www.mamedicalreservecorps.org

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