

MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS

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LETTER FROM THE MEDICAL DIRECTOR

Dear Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Volunteer:

GOOD NEWS!

On September 14, 2005 Acting Governor, Richard Codey signed into law the **Emergency Health Powers Act**.

While I profess no legal expertise, my reading of the ACT indicates that in the event of a Declaration of Public Health Emergency, health care providers including volunteers ". . . shall not be liable for any civil damages as a result of the provider's acts or omissions in **providing medical care or treatment** related to the public health emergency in good faith and in accordance with the pro-

visions of this ACT". (Section C. 26: 13-20)

It further states "...shall not be liable for any civil damages as a result of the provider's acts or omissions in **undertaking public health preparedness activities**, which activities shall include, but not be limited to, pre-event planning, drills and other public health preparedness efforts.

"Furthermore, it was stated at the Region II Educational Conference (October 22, 2005, Manalapan, NJ) that only registered volunteers would receive immunity, so it behooves us to register as many health care volunteers as possible now, rather than

at the time of an emergency.

Registration is online at the NJDHSS MRC website:

<http://www.njmrc.nj.gov/hcpr/>

I urge each of you to review the Emergency Health Powers Act for yourselves and register on the NJDHSS MRC site.

Let us go forward collectively for the benefit of our fellow citizens in Morris County.

Regards,

Felix

Felix E. Schletter, MD
Medical Director, MRC

**On Line Source for
the Emergency
Health Powers Act:
S2085**

**[http://
www.njleg.state.nj.us
/bills/BillView.asp](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bills/BillView.asp)**

MRC:

900 medical professionals

250 non medical

professionals
and growing

AUTHORIZED ACTIVITIES INCLUDED IN THE ACT:

- Requiring pharmacists to report unusual increases or types of prescriptions
 - Establishing an Emergency Health Care Provider Registry
 - Prioritizing target groups for vaccines, immune products and treatment
 - Controlling and redistributing resources, e.g. facilities, supplies, commodities and personnel
 - Implementing isolations and quarantine procedures
 - Acquiring access to medical information of individuals
- This law also specifies that the Office of Health Management, as a LINCS (local information network) agency, is to assist NJDHSS with the planning and coordination of all activities related to public health preparedness.



ROBERT TOSATTO: FEDERAL PERSPECTIVE ON MRC

The Medical Reserve Corps Region II had an educational conference on October 22, 2005.

The keynote speaker was Robert Tosatto, Director of the Medical Reserve Corps Program in the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General. He is responsible for overseeing the establishment, implementation and coordination of MRC units.

The MRC provides a way for people to volunteer using professional capacity. The mission is to help local public health respond to

public health needs .

There are 35,000 MRC volunteers across the United States. After Katrina, MRC volunteers helped to establish medical needs shelters and medical sites. While staff people were deployed to the Gulf Coast, some localities used MRC to do health assessments and screenings to fill the need in the communities.

The Surgeon General's priorities are :

Increasing prevention efforts, equal access for everyone, and improving public health preparedness. The MRC plays an

important role in supplementing existing capabilities.

Commander Tosatto expressed the Surgeon General's gratitude for each and every volunteer.

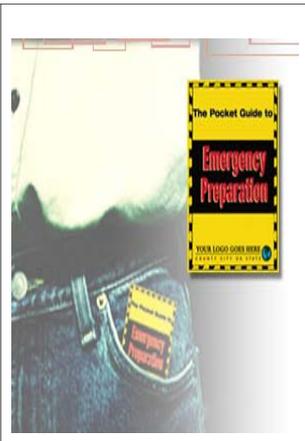
"MRC is not just showing up. It involves training, education and participation," Commander Tosatto said.

To address some of the educational needs of MRC volunteers in Region II, this conference included presentations on the Incident Command System, the National Response Plan and the National Incident Management System,

Disaster Mental Health, the Strategic National Stockpile, Pediatric Care During Emergencies, Overview of Bioterrorism, Caring for the Elderly During Emergencies and Chemical & Radiological Terrorism. Overall it was a very well received program by those who attended.

The Office of Health Management is planning to offer an education day for the MRC members of Morris County. They will also offer fit testing on N95 masks, as well as creating identification cards for members. Look for an email with specific information.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS POCKET GUIDE



This pocket guide contains local information specific to public health emergencies.

Included are important phone numbers for Emergency Management, NJDHSS, and hotlines for emergency information.

There are articles on biological, chemical, and radiological emergencies.

Preparedness planning information is included. Considerations for emergency kits, what it means to shelter-in place, and where county residents can get more information.

The guide is available in English and Spanish and they are being distributed throughout the county through municipal public health, businesses, and

schools.

Any organization which wants the guides can contact the Office of Health Management.

They come in boxes of 950, or can be broken down into smaller numbers.

A version of the pocket guide is available on the website: www.morrishealth.org.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE REPORTING SYSTEM GETS AN UPDATE

The capability to maintain data and surveillance on diseases and outbreaks within the County is crucial in preventing and containing the rapid spread of disease. The CDRSS (Communicable Disease Reporting and Surveillance System), is a completely redesigned surveillance tool that is designed to help the public health community do just that.

The new tool will allow the local health departments, laboratories and

the hospitals to enter communicable disease reports directly onto a central database. The data can then be viewed by the local health departments, the County Epidemiologist, the hospitals and the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) based on their jurisdictional authority.

Within Morris County, the new system will allow the Epidemiologist to monitor trends of communicable diseases within the county. This new system will

also allow public health authorities to follow up with people who may have come in contact with an infected patient. This is very important for prevention and intervention, as well as outbreak investigation and control measures.

A map feature in the CDRSS system will allow us to see a visual representation of the geographic area associated with outbreaks.

For more information on this new tool, email us at [ninarayan@co.morris.nj.us](mailto:nnarayan@co.morris.nj.us).

FIRST RESPONDER PROPHYLAXIS PLAN

As we have seen first hand from Hurricane Katrina, first responders are vital in maintaining the infrastructure during public health emergencies. Morris County realizes that first responders, including MRC volunteers, will be unable to respond to a situation unless they themselves are first protected. This spring the County will be coordinating an exercise to test how effectively we can supply all first responders and

their immediate families with prophylaxis within a 24 hour period. Components will include completion of pre-event screening forms for each household member which will be distributed this winter. By calculating how many doses of Ciprofloxacin and Doxycycline we need to have stockpiled for each responder household, we can arrange the shipments pre-event. MRC volunteers do fall under the first responder

category, so don't be surprised if your local health officer contacts you in the upcoming weeks to participate! Feel free to contact your local health department with any further questions or concerns.



Calling All MRC

The NJDHSS has a website for registration for Medical Reserve Corps volunteers.

As the Morris County MRC is over 900, we are asking that every one, even if previously registered, register themselves.

Please go to: <http://www.njmrc.nj.gov/>

NEW JERSEY LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (NJLMN)

The NJLMN system is a one-stop, on-line location for workforce development for those involved in New Jersey public health safety and emergency preparedness.

NJLMN is organized into communities which provide access to educational programs that can serve responders, volunteers, and planners at any stage of their development.

Registration, registering and

signing in each time the system is used is required. The benefit to the user is that it creates a transcript and tracks courses taken.

The communities on the site include the course catalog, a library, a directory of nationwide emergency preparedness programs and a public health training survey.

It would be beneficial to Morris County to have MRC

members register and when possible, take available trainings. It would also be beneficial for MRC members to take the public health training survey.

This data is used to develop trainings to meet the needs of volunteers and responders.

Featured on the site are related government links and general information on Pandemic Flu.

Visit the site at: www.njlmn.rutgers.edu

We Still Need:

Pharmacists

Medical Doctors

Trained Vaccinators

Nurses

Clerical Volunteers

Veterinarians

COUNTY OUTBREAK RAPID ACTION TEAM

The COBRA team's primary responsibility is to conduct investigations of any initial suspected cases of Category A Biological Agents (Anthrax, Plague, Smallpox) and certain Class B Agents (Ricin toxin). The team is also responsible for the prophylaxis of contacts and implementing isolation and quarantine of initial case contacts. The Team may

be activated by the County Health Officer when any other outbreak threatens the County of Morris. Team Members include a Team Leader, Epidemiologist, Public Health Nurse, Law Enforcement Officer, Medical, Veterinary & Pharmacy Advisor, Mental Health Counselor and Medical Examiner. Activation of the COBRA team would indicate a

public health emergency for Morris County, and therefore, MRC members might be called upon to assist. Roles for volunteers would include assisting with case contact disease investigation, chemoprophylaxis of contacts, ring vaccination, or quarantine issues.

Look for Medical Reserve Corps Education Sessions in April and May.

Topics to be presented include:

Incident Command and NIMS System Overviews
POD and POD Alternatives
Public Information

Fit testing on N95 respirators and creation of ID will be offered.

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WWW.MORRISHEALTH.ORG

COUNTY PANDEMIC INFLUENZA PLAN

Pandemic influenza is a unique public health emergency. No one knows when the next influenza pandemic will occur. However, when it does occur it will be with little warning. Since the novel virus may be identified in any region of the world, experts believe that we will have between one to six months from the identification of a novel influenza virus to the time that widespread outbreaks begin to occur in the United States. Outbreaks are expected to occur simultaneously throughout much of the nation, preventing reallocation of human and material resources.

An influenza pandemic will occur in multiple waves. The

effect of the initial wave on individual communities will be relatively prolonged (as long as six to eight weeks) when compared to the minutes-to-hours observed in most natural disasters. During a single eight week period, Morris County could expect as many as 450 dead and close to 2250 hospitalized. If the outbreak is not brought under control, these numbers could repeat themselves in multiple waves over the course of months.

On November 23rd, the Morris County Office of Health Management released its Morris County Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Plan to the municipal

health departments of Morris County. The plan lays out actions and steps that local health departments and the County Office of Health Management can take in concert with the World Health Organization's pandemic flu phases.

Currently the World Health Organization is at Pandemic Alert - Phase 3. They have identified a new virus, H5N1, causing human cases, but there is no or very limited human to human transmission. For more information on the WHO Pandemic Phases check their website at <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/en/>.

Resources

www.fema.gov
www.ready.gov
www.cdc.gov
www.nj.state.us/health
www.morrishealth.org
www.northwestredcross.org
www.firstcallforhelp.org
<http://njlmn.rutgers.edu>