Although I have been a member of the Morris County Medical Reserve Corps for several years I never volunteered for deployment until Hurricane Irene when I checked my Email and it said that help was needed at the Mennen Arena where approximately four hundred evacuees from Atlantic City were being sheltered. It sounded as if they really needed help and I had no good reason not to go. They were asking for people to do twelve hour shifts. I responded that I was available and willing to help on whatever shift I was needed. I immediately got a response back asking me to come at 6 PM.

Although I was a Red Cross shelter. People there were of all ages from very young, 2 weeks, and very old. Many had chronic illnesses. Some were on oxygen and even brought their large tanks of oxygen with them. One man had a tracheostomy tube for the last 8 years and was unable to sleep lying down. There were diabetics who brought their medications as did most of the people but a couple forgot to bring to the glucometers to test their sugar. Others forgot to bring their medications because they had little time to get their things together for the evacuation. They were taken to two different facilities before being brought to Mennen and I am told they had not eaten in two days. It was sad to know that these folks had been uprooted from their homes, to know what they had been through and then as of last night not knowing if they would even have a home to return to. When gathering my personal items to take with me, I happened to think of taking some magazines to share with those who might be interested in looking at them. I thought it would give them something to do to pass the time. I meandered up and down the rows of cots talking to those who were not sleeping, offering to help them if they needed anything, bringing them bottles of water or Gatorade and assisting those needing help to get to the ladies room. This is the way I spent my night from 6 PM until 6 AM when my shift ended.

What a shocking site! When I walked in, the entire arena floor was covered with coats and people on them. Close to 400 people. This was a Red Cross shelter. People there were of all ages from very young, 2 weeks, and very old. Many had chronic illnesses. Some were on oxygen and even brought their large tanks of oxygen with them. One man had a tracheostomy tube for the last 8 years and was unable to sleep lying down. There were diabetics who brought their medications as did most of the people but a couple forgot to bring their glucometers to test their sugar. Others forgot to bring their medications because they had little time to get their things together for the evacuation. They were taken to two different facilities before being brought to Mennen and I am told they had not eaten in two days. It was sad to know that these folks had been uprooted from their homes, to know what they had been through and then as of last night not knowing if they would even have a home to return to. When gathering my personal items to take with me, I happened to think of taking some magazines to share with those who might be interested in looking at them. I thought it would give them something to do to pass the time. I meandered up and down the rows of cots talking to those who were not sleeping, offering to help them if they needed anything, bringing them bottles of water or Gatorade and assisting those needing help to get to the ladies room. This is the way I spent my night from 6 PM until 6 AM when my shift ended. The most impressive thing about the whole experience was to witness the assistance provided by many individuals and organizations. In addition to the Red Cross, support was given by Atlantic EMS who had several vehicles on site and transported approximately 24 people to the hospital in Parsippany, N.J. Many MRC members also agreed to remain on stand-by in the event additional resources were needed. Hurricane Irene resulted in significant flooding and property damage throughout Morris County. Recovery efforts are still ongoing in many communities. The storm highlighted the dedication and importance of the Morris County Medical Reserve Corps. I wish to thank all MRC Volunteers who assisted with shelter and call center efforts. Your assistance proved invaluable. I hope you find this addition of the MRC Newsletter informative and I look forward to working with you in protecting the health and wellness of our citizens in 2012.

On Sunday, August 28, 2011, Hurricane Irene made landfall in Brigantine, New Jersey. Weeks prior to the storm’s landfall, state, county, and local Office of Emergency Management officials closely monitored the storm’s progress and projected path. Preparations for possible landfall were also commenced. These pre-storm efforts proved vital to emergency response efforts during and after the storm. The storm’s intensity required evacuation of residents and the opening of emergency shelters in various Morris County municipalities.

On Saturday, August 27, 2011, the County opened an emergency shelter at the Mennen Arena in Morris Township to house evacuees from Atlantic County. Numerous members of the Morris County Medical Reserve Corps were deployed to the shelter and provided much needed assistance. MRC volunteers performed assessments and tended to the needs of evacuees. In addition, Medical Reserve Corps Volunteers also assisted with the handling of calls to the 2-1-1 call center in Parsippany, N.J. Many MRC members also agreed to remain on stand-by in the event additional resources were needed.

Hurricane Irene resulted in significant flooding and property damage throughout Morris County. Recovery efforts are still ongoing in many communities. The storm highlighted the dedication and importance of the Morris County Medical Reserve Corps. I wish to thank all MRC Volunteers who assisted with shelter and call center efforts. Your assistance proved invaluable. I hope you find this addition of the MRC Newsletter informative and I look forward to working with you in protecting the health and wellness of our citizens in 2012.

No one can predict when a disaster may strike such as a hurricane that caused severe flooding, an October snowstorm that left residents without power, and roads blocked with fallen trees and branches. Yet not being prepared for disasters is worse than the disaster. Fortunately for Morris County, we have an MRC that was willing to volunteer when the call went out for help with staffing a functional needs shelter and staffing the 2-1-1 call center. Over 30 MRC volunteers their time.

From each of these experiences we are better able to prepare for the next emergency. The agencies involved with the shelter have met to identify gaps to update our shelter plans. 2-1-1 has a better idea of when MRC volunteers would be needed to increase their surge capacity.
MRC Staff 2-1-1 Hotline: Laura Marx, Director-2-1-1

For the past several years, the Morris County MRC and NJ 2-1-1 have been poised to work together in a disaster. As Hurricane Irene neared NJ, the Morris County Office of Emergency Management suggested the public call 2-1-1 for help preparing for the storm. With a call volume steadily increasing even before the hurricane arrived, NJ 2-1-1 requested MRC volunteers who may be interested in staffing the phones.

Five MRC volunteers were deployed to NJ 2-1-1’s office in Parsippany as the hurricane approached that Saturday afternoon. The volunteers received an orientation about how NJ 2-1-1 responds in a disaster; providing information on evacuations, safety tips, flood control, pet friendly hotels to name a few and how to provide reassurance to those citizens truly frightened by what was to come. Without delay, the MRC volunteers were on the phones with the 2-1-1 staff answering calls. Those calls requiring higher level knowledge were easily transferred to a supervisor until the MRC volunteers were comfortable and confident in answering most requests.

NJ 2-1-1, with the help of the MRC, answered over 4000 calls in those first days. This just would not have been possible without the support of the Morris County MRC!

The volunteers that staffed 2-1-1 were not aware of this service. 2-1-1 directs callers to a variety of resources, staffs an addition hotline as well as the emergency shelter hotline. They were soon to experience how organized 2-1-1 is to give and get information. Whiteboards were used to update those on the phones with new information.

As one of the volunteers said “Some of the callers who were home alone just needed to hear a reassuring voice knowing there was someone they could talk to.” Another volunteer said “It was a very satisfying deployment in that I felt I was really providing a valuable service.” In October, new MRC volunteers are at risk of experiencing what psychologists refer to as traumatic incident—an exposure to catastrophic events, severely injured children or adults, dead bodies or body parts, or the immediate clean all wounds and cuts with soap and clean water. Traumatic Stress: Depending on the size and scale of the disaster, team members are at risk of experiencing what psychologists refer to traumatic incident—an incident that may involve exposure to catastrophic events, severely injured children or adults, dead bodies or body parts, or the loss of colleagues.

You may be provided with a briefing on signs and symptoms of stress, what you can do on-site and at home to take care of yourself, and counseling options available.

For more information visit: www.cdc.gov/disasters

H5N1 Avian Influenza 2011 Update
6 cases 310 deaths
Egypt

3 Cases 1 death
Cambodia
World wide since 2003: 525 human cases

H5N1

Happy New Years! May it be healthy, happy and safe for all.

2011 turned out to be a very exciting year with our first Northwest Regional POD exercise and the deployments during Hurricane Irene to the shelter at Mennen Arena and the 211 Call Center. Having such a unified response from our Morris County Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) demonstrates the value of participating in continuing education. Trainings provide the knowledge and skills needed if and when we are called upon to respond to an emergency. It also provides us with the comfort and familiarity of working together as a team, which was proven during our 2011 deployments. We hope to provide you with another year of interesting and effective trainings. We are still in the process of scheduling additional trainings that have not been listed in this newsletter because we are working out the details with the instructors.

I will continue to notify you of any up-coming trainings via emails. You can always check and see what more is available on the NJLMN. If you are receiving our newsletter and not receiving my emails please contact me at cbella@co.morris.nj.us. I thank you for all your hard work and dedication to our Morris County MRC.

Happy New Years!

Cindy Bella, R.N. B.S.N.