

## **MASSACHUSETTS**

### **Highlights of State Council Activities**

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is responsible for the implementation of the Citizen Corps Programs in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The focus of the Commonwealth's efforts in 2005 supported Citizen Corps Programs with all-hazards planning, public education, communication, training, exercises, management of Citizen Corps programs and activities, and equipping volunteers who have a role in disaster response.

### **Highlights of State Activities**

#### **Public Education and Outreach**

Local Citizen Corps Councils and programs conducted outreach and public education activities throughout the year. Dracut, MA CERT members participated in their local Old Home Day and Memorial Day Parade by handing out preparedness information to attendees and assisting with traffic control and parking. Belmont, MA Citizen Corps volunteers assisted in Child Safety Day by installing child safety seats for families.

While a Family CERT Day was scheduled in September 2005, the day was cancelled as Commonwealth resources, including Citizen Corps volunteers, were quickly diverted to assist in Hurricane Katrina response efforts.

#### **Training and Exercises**

In an effort to support the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Plant during an emergency, Massachusetts Citizen Corps has established a reception center for incoming evacuees. Thirty Citizen Corps volunteers have registered to provide support to the center by taking in arriving evacuees. Similar responses will be planned for the two other nuclear power plants in the Commonwealth. This Nuclear Preparedness Program Response incorporating CERT member involvement is the first of its kind in the nation.

During 2005, MEMA provided Citizen Corps volunteers with training in the National Incident Management System (NIMS), Incident Command System (ICS), shelter management, CPR, and search and rescue techniques.

#### **Volunteer Programs and Support**

The Massachusetts Citizen Corps Office developed a partnership with the State of Massachusetts Animal Response Team (SMART), a program providing for the shelter and care of animals during an emergency. A total of 450 volunteers, many from Citizen Corps, registered to assist.

The Massachusetts Citizen Corps Office in partnership with its local Belmont Citizen Corps Council and DEAF, Inc. conducted a CERT training course for hearing-impaired citizens. Sign-

language interpreters assisted in communicating course material and questions between students and instructors. The program concluded with hands-on Fire Safety at the Firefighters Academy in Stow, MA. With this training, the participants acquire the requisite qualifications to serve as CERT volunteers in their communities during emergencies.

The State's Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) programs continued to provide valuable support to public health and public safety officials and citizens. The MRCs maintained Web sites and created newsletters to be used for educational resources in area communities, the recruitment of prospective volunteers, and as bulletin boards for members.

During the October floods, Citizen Corps members were activated to assist with evacuation and shelter operations in affected areas. In addition, when dam breaks occurred, volunteers responded by supporting debris removal, rehabilitation, and transportation efforts.

### **Support for Hurricane Katrina Response**

Massachusetts Citizen Corps received overwhelming support from its Citizen Corps members, who clearly demonstrated volunteer spirit within their communities and state. Volunteers staffed the state's 1-800 call center number with 150 volunteers and coordinated the state Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters effort. Volunteers also assisted a local effort called *Operation Helping Hand*, by coordinating 24-hour staffing for information lines, managing donations and supplies, assisting the local Department of Transitional Assistance by providing services for evacuees, providing help to families requesting assistance at the local Disaster Recovery Center, and tutoring school children.

All Massachusetts MRC units assisted with medical clinic operations at the Camp Edwards Village, a Governor-designated area given its own zip code. During Operation Helping Hand, CERT teams assisted in guest needs including the activation of SMART at Camp Edwards Village.

### **National Preparedness Month**

Due to Hurricane Katrina's impact and the extensive involvement of Citizen Corps volunteers in *Operation Helping Hand*, the statewide *Family CERT Day* planned in recognition of National Preparedness Month was canceled. The achievements of all Massachusetts Citizen Corps volunteers during a month of national crisis made it a demonstration, as well as a celebration, of our nation's preparedness.