



# Volunteer Response in Massachusetts

## Avoiding Disaster during a Disaster: Improving Medical Volunteer Response

May 19, 2010

Mary E. Clark, JD, MPH  
Emergency Preparedness Bureau

## Overview

- MA landscape
- Why we need public health volunteers
- Role of DPH
- MA health & medical volunteer programs
- What we've learned from recent deployments
- What we've done
- What we still need to do: Liability

## Massachusetts Landscape

- 6.3 million residents
- 1 State Health Department
- 351 towns & cities/351 Local Health Boards and Emergency Management Directors
- 15 PH Emergency Preparedness Coalitions
- 2 Tribal Nations
- 75 Acute Care Hospitals
- 60+ Community Health Centers
- 550 Long-term Care Facilities

3

## Why We Need Volunteer Programs

- Not enough public health staff to respond to a crisis
- Individuals must be ready to respond
  - Identified
  - Credentialed
  - Trained
  - Exercised
  - Evaluated
- Supports community resiliency

4

## Role of DPH & EPB

- DPH has lead for coordinating health & medical disaster response (ESF8)
- EPB
  - Coordinates planning within DPH & with local health & healthcare system partners
  - Supports operations of 2 health & medical volunteer programs: MSAR & MRC

5

## MA System for Advanced Registration

- 2002 federal mandate for states to develop systems for advanced registration (ESAR-VHP)
- 20 categories of health care professionals (e.g., physicians, nurses, PA, pharmacists, EMTs, MH, dentists, vets, medical records technicians, etc)
- MSAR
  - statewide, secure database of pre-credentialed volunteer health care professionals
  - can be activated in public health emergency or state of emergency declared by the governor
  - has not been activated to date

6

## Who is Volunteering in MSAR (2314)

Advanced Practice Nurse	215
Clinical Social Worker	19
DO	8
EMT	54
Licensed Practical Nurse	5
MD	410
Medical and Clinical Laboratory Technician	1
Mental Health Counselor	12
PARAMEDIC	5
Pharmacist	6
Phlebotomist	1
Physician Assistant	7
Psychologist	6
Radiologic Technologist and Technician	1
Registered Nurse	1560
Respiratory Therapist	3
Veterinarian	1

## Medical Reserve Corps

- Established post 9/11 as part of Citizen Corps to strengthen
  - public health
  - emergency response
  - community resiliency
- 45 locally organized & managed units with 14,000+ medical and non-medical volunteers
- Volunteers provide
  - Surge capacity for shelters, flu clinics, etc
  - Staff extenders for PH activities (education, outreach, public health support)

8

## Recent MRC Deployments

- 2009-2010 H1N1 Response
  - $\approx$  1400 public clinics
  - > 7400 volunteer hours (1/3 units reporting)
- March 2010 Flooding
  - Disaster assessment teams
  - Shelter staffing
  - Distribution of clean-up supplies
- May 2010 Water Emergency
  - Notifications to restaurants
  - Water distribution
  - Outreach to those requiring additional assistance

## December 2008 Ice Storm



## Ice Storm Overview

- >1 million households lost power in the Northeast
- Power outages averaged 4-5 days with some areas as much as two weeks
- Counties hardest hit included Worcester, Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire, & Berkshire, but impact elsewhere as well
- Area hospitals at or beyond surge level
- Storm hit 12/12; last shelter operation ended 12/23

## Looking Back

- No organized communication between the agencies recruiting/assigning volunteers
- Limited ability to mobilize MRC volunteers in the communities hardest hit
- No centralized process for deploying MRC volunteers across unit boundaries
- No big picture of the types of health volunteers registered

## Looking Back 2

- No effective way to track whether volunteers got where they were needed, or were needed once they got there
- Lack of clarity about liability affected volunteer availability

## What We've Done

- MRC Working Group: protocol for centralized deployment of volunteers when state emergency operations center activated
- “Enhancing Effectiveness of Volunteer Registration Programs for Massachusetts Public Health Emergency Response”

(March 2009)

## What We've Done 2

- Multi-agency Volunteer Working Group for Disaster Responders
- Surveyed MRCs on volunteer management needs
- Implementing integrated volunteer management system

## What We Haven't Been Able to Do

Resolve liability concerns



## Contact



[www.mamedicalreservecorps.org](http://www.mamedicalreservecorps.org)



[www.mass.gov/MSAR](http://www.mass.gov/MSAR)