

## **The Medical Reserve Corps: An Opportunity for Health and Medical Physicists to Volunteer in Their Communities**

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The mission of the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) is to improve the health and safety of communities across the country by organizing and utilizing public health, medical and other volunteers.

The MRC was founded after President Bush's 2002 State of the Union Address, in which he asked all Americans to volunteer in support of their country. It is a partner program with [Citizen Corps](#), a national network of volunteers dedicated to ensuring hometown security. Citizen Corps, along with AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and the Peace Corps are part of the President's [USA Freedom Corps](#), which promotes volunteerism and service nationwide.

MRC units are community-based and function as a way to locally organize and utilize volunteers who want to donate their time and expertise to prepare for and respond to emergencies and promote healthy living throughout the year. MRC volunteers supplement existing emergency and public health resources. They are NOT first responders.

MRC volunteers include medical and public health professionals such as physicians, nurses, pharmacists, dentists, veterinarians, epidemiologists, and could include medical and health physicists. Many community members—interpreters, chaplains, office workers, legal advisors, and others—can also fill key support positions.

MRC units may have specific areas that are targeted to strengthen the public health infrastructure of their communities by increasing disease prevention activities, eliminating health disparities, and improving public health preparedness. Public health preparedness encompasses preparation and response activities involved with natural and man-made disasters. Currently, there are over 731 MRC units and more than 153,000 volunteers nationwide.

Due to the need to have radiation health and safety professionals available to support local, state, and federal responders after a radiological incident or event, in 2007, the Homeland Security Committee of the Health Physics Society adopted the project of recruiting health physicists into their local MRC units. Medical physicists would also clearly be beneficial members of their local MRC.

Examples of how health and medical physicists could be used after a radiological incident/event would include: 1. Acting as consultants to public health officials regarding human health effects from radiation exposures; 2. Providing contamination screening services at Community Receptions Centers; 3. Assisting in collecting bio-assays at Alternative Medical Treatments Sites; and, 4. Being the liaison between hospital emergency personnel and public health authorities in identifying and triaging radiation exposure victims.

Each MRC will provide benefits to volunteers including: 1. The opportunity to serve your community during times of need; 2. Education and training availability including learning about the Incident Command System; 3. Participation in table-top and field exercises; and, 4. First access to vaccinations and other medications during a biological event or disease outbreak (as well as your immediate family members).

This is a great opportunity for health and medical physicists to learn about disaster preparedness activities in their community and to be part of a response effort to mitigate the effects of natural or man-made disasters.

You can find out more information on the Medical Reserve Corps and can find your local unit by visiting the MRC website at:

<http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov>

Additional information on medical radiological emergency response can also be found on the Health Physics Society Homeland Security Committee Medical Response Subcommittee web page:

<https://hps.org/hsc/responsem.html>."