



A History of the MRC



Shortly after the planes crashed into the World Trade Center on 9/11, Mayor Giuliani of New York City asked for physicians to volunteer and help victims at Ground Zero. Medical volunteers arrived at the Stuyvesant Triage Center only to find a chaotic scene with no clear lines of authority. The medical volunteers organized themselves, took control of the situation, and began to triage victims. Two physicians coordinated the volunteer effort—they worked with the other physicians and medical personnel to tend to the injuries sustained by search and rescue workers.

Dr. Richard Hatchett, who was a coordinator at the triage center said shortly after 9/11, “The human response to the tragedy made you feel like somehow good was going to come out of this. Whoever attacked the towers had failed, if their purpose was to terrorize us. What it did was galvanize us. As soon as I signed off to the federal disaster team, I felt fortunate to be given to opportunity to help out.”

After the life-altering events of 9/11, the volunteer physicians recognized the need for an organized group of medical volunteers who would be trained and prepared to provide supplemental medical and public health support in response to emergency operations in New York City. The group submitted a proposal to the city, requesting that a cadre of trained medical volunteers be established; the proposal was later expanded to suggest a nationwide group of volunteers be developed—a concept that eventually reached President George W. Bush and Congress.

During President Bush’s delivery of the 2002 State of the Union Address, he asked all Americans to volunteer in support of their country. Shortly after this speech, the MRC was formed as a partnership with Citizen Corps, a national network dedicated to ensuring hometown security.

As of August 2011, the MRC program covered more than 90 percent of the U.S. population through a force that exceeds 208,000 volunteers in more than 995 geographically based units nationwide. These volunteers are actively engaged within their local communities and are committed to strengthening public health, emergency response, and community resiliency throughout the United States.

MRC units now spend a significant amount of time planning and preparing for both man-made and natural disasters, including hurricanes, tornadoes, anthrax attacks, plane crashes, pandemics, and dirty bombs. MRC units engage in large-scale exercises with community partners, such as local Emergency Response and Preparedness offices, American Red Cross chapters and local fire, emergency medical services, and law enforcement personnel, to ensure efficient and effective collaboration and operations during a real- life scenario.

If you would like more information about the McHenry County Medical Reserve Corps, contact us at (815) 334-4932. An electronic application is accessible through the McHenry County Department of Health website, in the Volunteer MRC section under Emergency Preparedness.

