



South Central Illinois CARES
Coalition



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“Living Healthy in Southern Illinois”

Washington County to Start Local Medical Reserve Corps Services

In response to the Sep 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, many medical professionals and other citizens offered their skills to a community in need. This outpouring of compassion and service highlighted the need to provide a more organized structure and approach for using volunteers in an emergency.

President George W. Bush issued a call in his State of the Union Address of Jan, 2002, for all Americans to “offer meaningful volunteer service in their communities, in whatever ways they could.” As a result, the USA Freedom Corps was launched to promote volunteerism both nationally and around the world. With the approval of Congress, Secretary of Health and Human Services, Tommy G. Thompson, began a demonstration project in the US Surgeon General’s Office. The Medical Reserve Corps (or MRC) was born as a specialized branch of the Department of Homeland Security. (medicalreservecorps.org)

Since that time, today’s MRC has grown to include over 200,000 volunteers participating in close to 1000 programs across the country. The MRC provides the structure necessary to deploy both medical and non-medical personnel in response to an emergency. The system identifies trained, credentialed personnel who are available and who are ready to respond to specific, emergency needs. Keep in mind that the “medical” in Medical Reserve Corps does not limit MRC units to medical professionals. Volunteers come from all “walks of life” and people without medical training are essential to support response and relief efforts!!

The County Health Department is pleased to expand the MRC’s outreach program to the citizens of Washington County. The South Central Illinois MRC’s objective is to support the Health Department’s mission to “provide services to protect the public’s health and to enhance the quality of human life through health education, health promotion and prevention.” To this end, volunteers may be called upon to assist with prevention and outreach activities such as health fairs, bulletin-board displays, public speaking on health initiatives, and community education on such topics as obesity/healthy eating, smoking cessation, and alcohol/substance abuse etc. In addition, the SCI MRC works closely with Emergency Management to supplement existing emergency services to provide relief for disaster victims and provide emergency communication services (such as ARES). Other partners may include local hospitals, neighboring health departments, or other organizations (such as the Red Cross.) Volunteers are trained in the Incident Command System, Emergency Preparedness, CPR/First Aid, Crisis Communication, Psychological First Aid and other topics so that they are ready to assist whenever and wherever critical events overwhelm existing resources within a community!

If making a difference and being able to help your neighbors in times of emergency is important to you, an introductory meeting to the Medical Reserve Corps will be held on Monday evening, Jan 13, 2014 from 7:00 to 8:30 pm, at the Washington County Health Department, 177 S. Washington in Nashville. The public is invited so call (618) 327-3644 to reserve your spot now and to learn more about volunteer opportunities with the Health Department.

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Office of Emergency Preparedness and Response

South Central Illinois Medical Reserve Corps

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