



Citizen Corps

A Guide for Local Officials

Revised, October 2011



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Summary

Executive Summary

In the face of adversity caused by natural and man-made disasters, Americans act with courage, compassion, and unity. Citizen Corps is the grassroots movement that taps this collaborative spirit by engaging government and the whole community at the local level to strengthen individual, organizational, and community preparedness before tragedy strikes.

Citizen Corps provides a platform for collaborative community planning and creates opportunities for individuals to volunteer to help their communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies. Citizen Corps brings together local leaders, citizen volunteers, and the network of first-responder organizations. First-responder organizations can include fire departments, police departments, and health-service providers. By fostering collaboration among all sectors of the community, citizens can participate in making their communities safer, stronger, and more resilient against the threats of terrorism, crime, and disasters of all kinds.

CITIZEN CORPS LEADERSHIP

The Citizen Corps effort is coordinated at the local level by Citizen Corps Councils or similar coordinating bodies, which bring together community leaders to plan for emergencies before they happen. The local leaders who serve on the Citizen Corps Councils should reflect all sectors of the whole community to ensure every stakeholder has a seat at the table. Citizen Corps Council members participate in developing community emergency plans, conduct localized outreach and education to the public, offer training and participation in exercises, encourage volunteerism, and in the event of a disaster, form an integral part of the response. Local Councils are committed to strengthening community safety and preparedness through increased civic engagement, and do so by tailoring goals and strategies to specific community vulnerabilities and populations.

Local Citizen Corps Councils are supported by state governments. State Citizen Corps Councils identify needs and develop a strategy for addressing those needs statewide by increasing government collaboration with nongovernmental entities and providing technical assistance to local Councils.

CITIZEN CORPS PARTNER PROGRAMS

Citizen Corps programs build on the successful efforts in place in many communities around the country to prevent crime and prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies. Programs started through local innovation are the foundation for Citizen Corps, and this approach to citizen participation in community safety is supported nationally. In addition to the Councils, five government-sponsored programs are recognized and known as Citizen Corps Partner Programs. These programs all encourage local volunteer participation.

The Citizen Corps Partner Programs are:

- ★ [Community Emergency Response Team](#): Federal Emergency Management Agency
- ★ [Fire Corps](#): Federal Emergency Management Agency and National Volunteer Fire Council
- ★ [Medical Reserve Corps](#): Department of Health and Human Services

Executive Summary (continued)

- ★ **USAonWatch–Neighborhood Watch:** Department of Justice and National Sheriffs' Association
- ★ **Volunteers in Police Service:** Department of Justice and International Association of Chiefs of Police

BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Major disasters can overload the capability of first responders, especially during the first hours of an incident. Having citizens who are better prepared to take care of themselves and others during times of crisis will allow first responders to focus their efforts on the most critical, life-threatening situations.

In addition, well-trained and organized group of volunteers can perform several tasks on an ongoing basis, allowing sworn officers, licensed health professionals, and professional firefighters to focus more on immediate emergency response needs and less on the routine or administrative aspects of their responsibilities.

Citizen Corps promotes whole community participation in disaster preparedness efforts and encourages citizens to take on active roles in preparing themselves, their families, and their communities.

OVERVIEW

Following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, state and local government officials increased opportunities for citizens to become an integral part of protecting the homeland and supporting local first responders. In January 2002, President of the United States George W. Bush launched USA Freedom Corps, from which Citizen Corps was born, to capture the spirit of service that emerged in communities throughout the country following the terrorist attacks.

Administered and supported nationally by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Citizen Corps effort helps bring government and community leaders together to plan and prepare for disasters.

Citizen Corps engages leaders from throughout the community to increase awareness of disasters and involve them in the disaster preparedness and planning process. Citizen Corps also encourages the whole community to participate in a range of measures to make their families, homes, and communities safer from the threats they face.

The Citizen Corps effort is coordinated at the local level by Citizen Corps Councils or a similar coordinating body, which brings together community leaders (including first responders) to plan for emergencies before they happen. The local leaders serving on the Citizen Corps Council should reflect all sectors of the whole community, ensuring every stakeholder has a seat at the table. Citizen Corps Council members participate in developing community emergency plans, conduct localized outreach and education to the public, promote and offer training and participation in exercises, encourage volunteerism, and, in the event of a disaster, form an integral part of the response.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT IMPLEMENTATION

Citizen Corps is designed to be tailored to each community and is managed at the local (county, city,

town or township, and tribal) level by Citizen Corps Councils or a similar entity. Councils comprise leaders from the whole community and include elected officials, emergency responders, government/government-sponsored organizations, voluntary response organizations, other civic organizations and private/non-profit representatives, faith-based organizations, and philanthropic organizations.

This guide will help your community join the many others across the country that has Citizen Corps Councils to increase individual and community preparedness.

The primary objectives of local Councils are to:

- ★ Match the needs of first responders with the skills and abilities of volunteers to make their families, their homes, and their communities safer from threats.
- ★ Educate the public on safety, help citizens take an active role in protecting themselves from harm, and teach them what to do in the event of a crisis.
- ★ Spearhead efforts to offer citizens new and existing volunteer opportunities, educational information, and training courses that address risks related to natural and man-made disasters.
- ★ Promote all Citizen Corps programs and activities.
- ★ Capture innovative practices and report accomplishments that can be replicated in other communities nationwide.
- ★ Survey the community to assess program effectiveness and Citizen Corps participation.

Creating a new organization to start Citizen Corps is not required. You are strongly encouraged to leverage existing resources and build on successful programs whenever possible. There may already be a collaborative body that can serve as the Citizen Corps Council in your community.

Citizen Corps (continued)

OTHER ACTIVITIES

There are many other opportunities for community organizations and individuals to get involved and give back to their community through active participation. A vast array of educational and volunteer activities are underway across the country with a focus on making communities safer, stronger, and better prepared. They can be either interest-based programs or broad, community-wide initiatives. If your community participates in such activities, we encourage you to integrate these efforts into the local Citizen Corps framework.

Examples could include:

- ★ Family preparedness materials being taught and distributed in neighborhoods, in the workplace, and throughout the school system.
- ★ Community, faith-based, and youth programs establishing neighborhood support networks and disseminating disaster preparedness educational materials and kits for targeted audiences, specifically seniors, people with diverse languages or cultural underpinnings, inhibiting economic factors or low income populations, access and functional needs, or with transportation dependencies.
- ★ Programs that involve volunteer medical professionals in an organized response to emergencies such as those administered by the American Red Cross.
- ★ Volunteer amateur radio operators serving as reserve communications experts and support in times of crisis.
- ★ Community and family disaster preparedness efforts conducted by established volunteer groups such as local Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) and Volunteer Centers, or community service organizations, places of

worship, and faith-based organizations already active in your community.

- ★ Volunteer fire departments and emergency medical teams.
- ★ Programs to train business owners and employees on business continuity, disaster preparedness, and emergency response measures.
- ★ High schools and college community service groups that promote preparedness.

Every community is unique. Citizen Corps calls on your community's creativity and inventiveness to develop other programs or activities that work in your area and that encompass all sectors of your community. Successful programs or approaches to citizen participation that start in one community can spread nationwide through the Citizen Corps network.

CITIZEN CORPS PARTNER PROGRAMS

In addition to Citizen Corps Councils, there are five government-sponsored programs at the national level to encourage local volunteer participation.

- ★ FEMA's [Community Emergency Response Team \(CERT\)](#) program educates people about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. Using the training learned in the classroom and during exercises, CERT members can assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event when professional responders are not immediately available to help. CERT members are also encouraged to support emergency response agencies by taking a more active role in emergency preparedness projects in their community. Additional information on CERT is available at <http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert>.

Citizen Corps (continued)

- ★ **Fire Corps** is supported by FEMA and the National Volunteer Fire Council to build the capacity of fire and rescue departments by connecting them to community volunteers who can assist in a variety of non-emergency roles. Departments utilize citizen advocates in non-operational roles, empowering them to develop, implement, and sustain programs to meet the needs of their community. Engaging citizens allows departments to increase the services they offer, such as enhanced fire safety education programs. Additional information on the Fire Corps is available at <http://www.firecorps.org/>.
- ★ Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) administers the **Medical Reserve Corps** to engage volunteers to strengthen public health, emergency response, and community resiliency. Through this program, practicing and retired volunteers trained in healthcare and others interested in public health issues can assist during large-scale emergencies and augment the emergency medical response community. Trained Medical Reserve Corps volunteers can also play a productive role in meeting pressing but non-emergency public health needs of the community throughout the year. Additional information is available at <http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov>.
- ★ The **USAonWatch–Neighborhood Watch Program**, administered by the National Sheriffs’ Association and supported by the Department of Justice (DOJ), works to unite law enforcement agencies, private organizations, and individual citizens in a nationwide effort to reduce crime and improve local communities. Neighborhood Watch encourages residents to play a role in homeland security through personal responsibility, training, and volunteer service, and has expanded this role to include disaster preparedness, emergency response, and terrorism awareness.

Neighborhood Watch groups across the country empower citizens to prevent crime and assist law enforcement agencies in keeping communities safe. USAonWatch is the portal for training to assist law enforcement agencies and their communities, and offers resource documents, watch stories, networking, and assistance to the field. Additional information about Neighborhood Watch efforts is available at <http://www.usaonwatch.org>.

- ★ **Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS)** is administered by the International Association of Chiefs of Police and supported by DOJ. The program provides training and resources for volunteers to assist local law enforcement in performing administrative and non-intervention policing activities to improve public safety. VIPS allows law enforcement professionals to focus their efforts on prevention and protection operations and for ensuring the overall safety and security of citizens. Additional information is available at <http://www.policevolunteers.org/>.

Additional volunteer activities can be found in Appendix B: Opportunities for Citizen Corps Volunteers.

BENEFITS TO YOUR COMMUNITY

Securing our safety requires all citizens to work together. Every American has a shared responsibility and a critical role to play in emergency preparedness. Major disasters in a community can overload the capability of first responders, especially during the first critical hours of the event. Citizen Corps supports planning for the whole community and provides a well-trained, readily available pool of local citizens who know their community and who can help during this critical time when outside assistance may have not yet arrived.

On a day-to-day basis, your Council will help people take a more active role in crime prevention, risk reduction, emergency preparedness, and public health issues. Citizen Corps Councils and

Citizen Corps (continued)

the programs they oversee will make your community a safer, better place to live.

Specific benefits include:

- ★ Incorporating the insights and perspectives of the whole community to strengthen emergency preparedness and response plans.
- ★ Supplementing a community's professional police, fire, emergency management, public health, and public safety capabilities where appropriate, especially in times of emergency.
- ★ Giving the residents of your community a greater sense of security, responsibility, and personal control.
- ★ Showcasing your community's efforts in crime prevention, public health and safety, emergency medical response, risk reduction and mitigation practices, emergency preparedness, and emergency response as part of the national Citizen Corps initiative.
- ★ Bringing together the volunteer and the first-responder communities to promote the concept that everyone has a role in making their community safer, stronger, and better prepared.
- ★ Demonstrating your leadership and your personal commitment to the safety of your community.
- ★ Building community pride and patriotism.
- ★ Preparing us all for the vital role of caring for ourselves and others in times of crisis.

ADDITIONAL CITIZEN CORPS RESOURCES

A vast array of educational and volunteer activities are underway across the country with a focus on making communities safer, stronger, and better prepared. In addition to councils and volunteer programs, Citizen Corps promotes other partners and resources that support the community preparedness mission.

Additional Citizen Corps resources include:

- ★ **Citizen Corps Affiliate Organizations:** Citizen Corps Affiliates offer communities resources for public education, outreach, and training. They support volunteers interested in helping to make their community safer or offer volunteer service opportunities to support first responders, disaster relief activities, and community safety efforts. The list of Citizen Corps Affiliates is available at <http://www.citizencorps.gov/partnersandaffiliates/affiliate.shtm>.
- ★ **Ready Campaign:** Launched in February 2003, *Ready* is FEMA's national public service advertising (PSA) campaign designed to educate and empower Americans to prepare for and respond to emergencies, including natural and man-made disasters. The goal of the campaign is to involve the public and ultimately increase the level of basic preparedness across the nation. Campaign information and materials are available at <http://www.ready.gov/>.
- ★ ***Are You Ready? A Guide to Citizen Preparedness:*** Produced by FEMA, this guide provides comprehensive practical information on how your family can prepare for any disaster. It covers hazard-specific safety tips, including natural and technological disasters and information on terrorism. *Are You Ready?* is available for download at <http://www.fema.gov/areyouready/>.
- ★ **Homeland Security Grant Program:** This DHS-sponsored funding stream supports community preparedness and resilience efforts at the state and local levels. The Citizen Corps Program grant supports Councils and volunteer programs with the goal of building and sustaining programs to develop resources and provide opportunities for individuals to get involved.

Citizen Corps (continued)

Several other DHS grant programs support community preparedness. Find out more at <http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/index.shtm>.

★ [Appendix A: Community and Emergency Preparedness Organizations](#) of this publication provides the website addresses of other federal agencies and organizations that have useful information relating to the Citizen Corps mission.

ORGANIZING A CITIZEN CORPS COUNCIL

Communities all across America already embrace the principles of Citizen Corps. Many elected officials, business leaders, and involved citizens are already doing their part to make their community a great place to live. Many communities already organize public events and volunteer programs and sponsor campaigns for preparedness in a community. These activities are at the heart of Citizen Corps.

Each community and region determines the geographic boundaries and membership for its Council. To help achieve its mission, Citizen Corps Councils must be sponsored by local elected leaders or emergency management organizations. To represent the whole community, Councils are also encouraged to include representation from the following:

- ★ **Leadership from elected offices:** The mayor, city council members, county commissioners, and tribal government leaders.
- ★ **Leadership from emergency management and from the first-responder community:** Law enforcement, fire or emergency medical services, and health care providers.
- ★ **Leadership from government/government-sponsored organizations:** Community leaders from educational institutions and school boards, the business community, environmental and transportation groups, and the uniformed Armed Forces or the National Guard.
- ★ **Leadership from the private sector:** Privately owned critical infrastructure, entertainment or sports venues, shopping centers or malls, private schools or universities, private hospitals, assisted living facilities, and the media.
- ★ **Leadership from civic organizations and private non-profit representatives:** Civic organizations (Rotary, American Legion, VFW), volunteer centers, the Chamber of Commerce or the Jaycees, and neighborhood/community/homeowner associations.
- ★ **Leadership from voluntary response organizations:** The American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and Voluntary or Community Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD/COAD).
- ★ **Leadership from faith- or interfaith-based organizations.**
- ★ **Leadership from advocacy organizations:** Disability service organizations.
- ★ **Leadership from philanthropic organizations:** The United Way and community foundations.

The primary qualification to participating on the Council is making a commitment to help the public be more prepared.

You do not need to create a new organization to start Citizen Corps. Leveraging existing resources is strongly encouraged. If your community already has a strong team comprised of all sectors of your community, you may want to ask this group to take on the responsibility of promoting Citizen Corps and to acknowledge this group as affiliated with Citizen Corps. Groups with many of the same partners, such as Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs), could take the lead with additional relevant parties to implement Citizen Corps.

A number of national organizations such as the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army could become key participants in your local management structure. If your community does not have local representation of these groups, you may want to contact the national organization to see how you can start a local affiliate.

However you choose to establish the local management structure, this group should be charged with representing the interests and the

Citizen Corps Councils (continued)

perspectives of the whole community and with bringing Citizen Corps programs and principles to residents of the community.

Depending on the size of your community, you may need to have a steering committee within the Citizen Corps Council and subcommittees to focus on particular efforts. Subcommittees can be assigned a particular function such as training, or new targeted initiatives such as youth preparedness education.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership within the Council is critical for success. A motivated leader will ensure a strong tie to local government and beyond to strengthen collaboration and community resilience. This leader can be an elected community official, an executive with one of your community's major employers, the head of your community's economic development group, or a leader from the volunteer community.

The most important qualification for the leader of the Council is the ability to motivate team members to reach your collective goals: making your community a safer place to live, work, and play; providing opportunities for all citizens to participate; and developing a commitment to broaden community representation. If the local elected official is not the operational leader of the Council, it is critical for he or she to provide clear and public support to the Council through public endorsements and stay informed of Council activities.

Equally important is the commitment from government officials to engage with representatives from the whole community. Successful emergency preparedness and response requires participation from everyone in the community, and government officials are critical leaders in this effort.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CITIZEN CORPS COUNCIL

While this initiative provides tremendous flexibility for you to implement Citizen Corps in a way that best suits your community, some general responsibilities of the local organizing group include:

- ★ Creating an action plan to mobilize the community during a large-scale event and to involve community members in preparedness and planning, protection, prevention, mitigation, and response and recovery activities.
- ★ Identifying ways in which the community's volunteer resources can help meet the needs of its first responders.
- ★ Working with existing neighborhood leaders, or creating a neighborhood leadership structure, to design a systematic approach to educate the public and encourage Citizen Corps participation throughout the community.
- ★ Spearheading efforts to offer citizens new and existing volunteer opportunities, educational information, and training courses to address natural disaster risks, crime, terrorism, and public health issues.
- ★ Recognizing all activities that promote disaster training and encouraging new endeavors.
- ★ Organizing special projects and community events to promote preparedness activities.
- ★ Fostering a spirit of mutual support by working with Citizen Corps Councils in neighboring communities and jurisdictions to be able to share resources in times of need.
- ★ Capturing innovative practices and reporting accomplishments.
- ★ Surveying the community to assess increased preparedness and knowledge of local hazards community plans.

Citizen Corps Councils (continued)

LIABILITY ISSUES

Liability can be a significant concern and a potential barrier to volunteer involvement in emergency services. Liability—legal responsibility for one’s acts or omissions—presents a number of different concerns: legally imposed payment of damages for personal injury or property damage, penalties for practicing a profession or trade without the required license or permit, compensation for lost income and medical expenses of an injured volunteer, and damages for breach of contract. Councils should consult with a local attorney regarding any risks or liabilities that might arise from its activities. Most local bar associations encourage members to provide pro bono (free of charge) services to worthwhile causes. A Council’s potential exposure to liability for acts or omissions of its staff or volunteers will vary from state to state.

Individuals who participate in Council activities should also be advised of their potential risks of liability under state law. Some volunteer activities may be covered by “Good Samaritan” laws, which protect volunteers who render assistance in limited circumstances. Councils may consider obtaining release from liability and/or similar instruments if local legal counsel deems it necessary. The Citizen Corps Liability Guide is available for download at http://www.citizencorps.gov/downloads/pdf/Citizen_Corps_Volunteer_Liability_Guide.pdf.

INITIAL MEETINGS

Creating a Citizen Corps Council or asking an existing organizing group to expand its mission and take on this responsibility is an easy first step to making Citizen Corps an active part of your community. You may want to hold one or more brainstorming sessions where members can collectively identify goals and develop a better understanding of the risks your community faces. Topics that the Citizen Corps Council might address can include:

- ★ Educating Council members on the roles, responsibilities, and practices of the first responders, volunteer organizations, and any existing neighborhood organizational structure in the community.
- ★ Identifying the existing activities and resources within your community that support community preparedness.
- ★ Identifying volunteer groups within your community that could assist in reducing risk or that could supplement resources in an emergency.
- ★ Creating a menu of volunteer opportunities in which community residents could easily participate, or partnering with the local Volunteer Center, if you have one, to design volunteer recruitment strategies.
- ★ Assessing resources within your community that could be drawn on to support volunteerism and public education in your community.
- ★ Identifying possible resources to support Citizen Corps, including local private sector support and contributions from foundations and non-profit organizations.
- ★ Discussing opportunities to build public awareness and to educate the community about training and volunteer opportunities within your community.

DEVELOPING A CITIZEN CORPS ACTION PLAN

As you begin to assess your needs and resources, you should work toward developing a clear mission statement and an action plan. Your Citizen Corps Council action plan can include short- and long-term goals and a community mobilization plan with specific steps outlining how to meet these goals.

Short-term goals can include a campaign for working smoke alarms or family emergency plans in every household by the time school starts again each fall, having each business in the community practice its evacuation plan within a specific month, training all senior high school students in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), or having Neighborhood Watch groups in all neighborhoods of the community. You may also want to target specific groups within your community, such as people living in high-risk areas or youth and individuals with access and/or functional needs.

It will be important for you to set meaningful and attainable goals, make them public, meet them, and then recognize and celebrate your success.

LINKING LOCAL ACTIVITIES WITH THE NATIONAL EFFORT

Although Citizen Corps happens at the grassroots level, it is important to link local activities to the national effort. Community preparedness initiatives should receive public recognition through various sources. Activities incorporating citizen participation in emergency preparedness, response capability training, crime prevention, and skill-based volunteer programs related to community safety can be identified with Citizen Corps.

Getting Started (continued)

A great way to get started is by hosting a public event to recognize the activities that volunteers, first responders, and residents in your community are already doing. Explain the national initiative linking all these activities and introducing other activities to promote personal and community safety. Make a commitment to help each resident in the community participate in these initiatives and encourage others to do the same.

Your community's success depends on engaging government and civic leaders, individuals, and organizations—including media—as partners to develop goals and implement strategies that foster community resilience. The media—television, radio, newspapers, the Internet, and others—can be invaluable resources in your efforts to increase awareness and educate the public about preparedness and prevention measures, training opportunities, and volunteer programs. Leverage the support and resources of every Citizen Corps Council member to convey and reinforce crucial disaster preparedness messages to the many audiences throughout your community.

There is no standard way to approach promoting your local efforts; each community is encouraged to be creative. You may host community preparedness days to challenge everyone in the community to put together a home emergency kit. Another may use the local media outlets and/or social media sites to maximize free outreach and at a low or no cost to promote local activities and to educate the public. Another may focus on the school system to disseminate information. Some communities will do all of these and more. But remember, your individual efforts matter and overall improve our nationwide goal of preparing individuals, families, communities, and organizations.

FEMA can also assist in promoting local Councils through its National Registry. Local Councils must submit and keep an updated profile of their membership and activities to receive recognition from FEMA and remain eligible for grant funding. With complete and current data, FEMA can tell the national story on community preparedness and continue to provide targeted resources for Council development and sustainment. You can register at <http://www.citizencorps.gov/councils/registry.shtm>.

Through this directory you can connect with other Citizen Corps Councils throughout the Nation and have a direct exchange of information with other local leaders working to promote preparedness in their communities. Your state and federal partners will also be able to contact you with updated information and collect innovative local practices for national promulgation. The directory makes it easy for volunteers, potential non-government and private sector partners, and local community members to find you. You can access a complete list of state and local Councils at <http://www.citizencorps.gov/cc/CouncilMapIndex.do>.

FEMA maintains a Citizen Corps Twitter Account at http://twitter.com/#!/Citizen_Corps/. Share with followers what you're doing and comment on what others are doing in order to further develop yours and improve others' community preparedness strategies.

IV.

Resources

Available Resources

With the readily available resources, you can, strengthen citizen participation and preparedness in your community. Volunteer agencies in your community and your Volunteer Center, if you have one, can help you better direct volunteer interest in disaster preparedness. There are also Local businesses can also participate in several low cost ways such as donating the cost of a publication, sponsoring a public education fair, hosting a training session for employees or neighborhood residents, or developing emergency preparedness plans to protect their employees and assets. Federal and state governments will provide training materials and technical assistance to help you get started and to sustain momentum.

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), a federal agency operating service programs nationwide, may make volunteers who participate in AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve America programs available to Citizen Corps Councils. Many of these participants are already active in disaster-related programs with other voluntary agencies. Volunteers can help communities establish a training and information delivery system in neighborhoods, schools, and businesses, and can support family preparedness and crime prevention initiatives in local communities or throughout entire regions. Additional information is available at <http://www.nationalservice.gov/>.

Volunteer support and participation in Citizen Corps can come from a variety of sources. Encourage your Council members to be creative when thinking about potential resources that exist throughout the community. Appendix A: Community and Emergency Preparedness Organizations is a list of government, emergency management, and first-responder community websites that may be helpful to you as you expand your volunteer base. Appendix C: Potential Resources for Citizen Corps Councils includes a list of questions to help your Council identify possible personnel, material, and funding resources.

Many resources already exist to support your efforts and don't require additional funding to develop or utilize. Contact your state Citizen Corps Council Program Manager to find out what other Councils are doing. There may be planning, training, and/or educational opportunities going on near you. In addition to promoting nearby opportunities, working with other Councils to provide mutually beneficial cross-training will support local responses should events take place that affect more than just your geographical area of responsibility. You can also access a variety of resources from FEMA and from around the country via the Citizen Corps website at <http://www.citizencorps.gov>.

Some federal grants support community preparedness activities. However, it's important for Councils to leverage existing resources and plan for potential cuts in funding. Some strategies for leveraging funding and program sustainment include:

- ★ **Regionalization:** Local Councils, in order to do more with less, can regionalize their structure to maximize reach with more robust resources and opportunities that cross county lines. Councils could establish Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) with other Councils or organizations in order to support one another in times of need.
- ★ **Private sector partnerships:** Establish partnerships with private sector entities or a community foundation to co-sponsor initiatives.
- ★ **Non-profit charitable status:** Organizations can apply for 501(c)3 status in order to receive certain tax exemptions and also receive tax-deductible charitable contributions. *Note: contact your state Citizen Corps Council coordinator to receive information about how that will affect your eligibility to receive federal grant funding and/or rules and regulations for partnering with 501(c)3 organizations if you receive a federal grant.

Available Resources (continued)

- ★ **Free resources:** FEMA and other organizations promote free volunteer training materials. Social media resources are effective for improving outreach and communication efforts to increase program awareness. Most Citizen Corps Affiliate training, tools, and resources are free and available through a local chapter or for download on a national website.

Communicating success is a key element of sustaining momentum. A Council representing and connected to the many and varied organizations and individuals with a vested interest in your community's well-being is uniquely positioned to spread the word about the value of Citizen Corps and its efforts.

It is important to share your success with the residents of your community as well as with your state and federal partners. By sharing successful ideas and practices in one community, similar actions can be embraced by other communities and can inspire further creativity.

Developing a strong Citizen Corps Council will require significant proactive communication with residents of your community. Identifying creative ways to get the message out about opportunities available through Citizen Corps, as well as calling your citizens to action and communicating success, will require an ongoing communications strategy that can include media coverage, events, and presentations.

Local media can be potential allies in your efforts. In an ever-growing world of communication opportunities, these traditional outlets remain a vital source of information for our communities and have a huge influence on how the public thinks about disaster preparedness. Councils can also take advantage of Web-based interactive social media to promote disaster preparedness efforts in the community.

You may want to consider forming a communications committee within your Council that includes local media representatives, public relations and marketing executives, and talented spokespersons who will help you to effectively recruit and educate members of your community.

The Council and/or communications committee may want to consider:

- ★ Developing a presentation on local preparedness, including important skills, supplies, and

exercises. Once a presentation has been developed, council members present preparedness guidance to community groups, local parent/teacher associations, volunteer clubs, and others.

- ★ Developing a media outreach strategy that will tap into and develop relationships with your community's local media to educate them on individual and organizational preparedness. Media opportunities might include interviews with participants active in Neighborhood Watch, coverage of your local government's proclamation of National Preparedness Month, letters to the editor, or meeting with the editorial board about Citizen Corps. Local media can also sponsor a regular newspaper, radio, or television spot to feature volunteer opportunities and Citizen Corps activities/success stories.
- ★ Designating contacts (perhaps recognizable local officials) to speak to the media and working with these contacts to develop a consistent message for promoting personal preparedness within your community.
- ★ Incorporating preparedness tips and training and volunteer opportunities into newsletters and other publications developed by your community's local government, Chamber of Commerce, or neighborhood associations.
- ★ Planning a community Citizen Corps fair to bring together organizations that can offer volunteer opportunities in your community to citizens interested in contributing. If you invite a local radio station to sponsor the fair, it can provide public service announcements in advance to promote the fair and broadcast from it live on the day of the event. Your local Volunteer Center may be able to help arrange such an event.
- ★ Partnering with local sports and entertainment venues, such as minor league baseball teams, college football organizations, and county fairs to spread your message at large-scale events.

Communicating Success (continued)

- ★ Contacting the governor's office, mayor, city council, and members of Congress and their local staff to help promote Citizen Corps activities within your community.
- ★ Creating a recognition committee could provide support and recognition to Citizen Corps members and volunteers. Your local Volunteer Center can assist you with ideas for appropriate public recognition. To recognize local Citizen Corps efforts, FEMA sponsors a national awards program, the Individual and Community Preparedness Awards. The awards honor innovative and outstanding achievements at all levels and showcase the amazing work and success of Citizen Corps.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Citizen Corps is an example of how, over the past decade, state and local government officials have increased opportunities for citizens to become an integral part of protecting the homeland and supporting the local first responders. FEMA supports a whole-community approach to emergency management which includes utilizing and recognizing the value of community resources like Citizen Corps.

Additional aspects of the federal government role in Citizen Corps include:

- ★ Promoting Citizen Corps at the national level.
- ★ Fostering state and community participation, evaluating progress, recognizing accomplishments, and providing opportunities for mentoring and sharing ideas and resources.
- ★ Supporting and coordinating participation in National Preparedness Month and other campaign activities.
- ★ Compiling accurate information and developing training standards and materials for Citizen Corps and CERT activities.
- ★ Providing online educational opportunities and a forum/directory of local contacts.
- ★ Assisting with the identification of volunteer programs and initiatives that support community preparedness goals.
- ★ Helping to promote non-profit and private sector partnerships throughout the country.
- ★ Developing financial incentives and tie-ins with other federal programs to encourage local government participation.

At the national level, Citizen Corps is coordinated by FEMA, which works with federal agencies, national volunteer organizations, and representatives from first-responder associations to improve the programs and resources available to the public.

FEMA also has 10 regional offices throughout the country working with states and local communities to help them prepare, mitigate, respond to, and recover from disasters. Each regional office has expert staff (usually a Community Preparedness Officer or specialist) who help state and local Citizen Corps Councils to develop, improve, maintain, and promote their programs.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Local Citizen Corps Councils are supported by a state coordinator. States have also formed Citizen Corps Councils to bring together a number of state and local organizations.

State Citizen Corps Councils foster collaboration and address the needs of communities across the state. They also offer local Councils the benefits of their experience and exposure to a wide variety of programs, allowing them to share innovative practices and approaches that are effective. Sovereign tribal nations, although located within geographical states, are recognized as the inherent authority of their indigenous population.

Key state responsibilities include:

- ★ Identifying needs and developing a statewide strategy for increasing first responder and volunteer collaboration.
- ★ Developing statewide marketing strategies.
- ★ Matching training needs with other major state training initiatives.
- ★ Reporting statewide accomplishments.
- ★ Ensuring that Citizen Corps and community preparedness organizations receive consideration for any relevant grant funding administered by the state.
- ★ Supporting Citizen Corps by developing relevant state policies and practices.

Government Roles (continued)

To lend their support, governors and other state representatives can also promote Citizen Corps in public speaking engagements, press conferences, and media events.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local government works closely with community members to advance local Citizen Corps Council priorities. Local officials like you and other leaders know the most about their community residents and local hazards that will affect them. Local first-responder organizations can also administer the Council to enhance public education and safety programs and to maintain collaboration with the whole community.

VII.

Conclusion

Effective emergency management requires the participation of community leaders in developing community plans, conducting localized outreach, educating the public, promoting training, participating in exercises, encouraging volunteerism, and of course, should the worst happen, being an integral part of the response. The foundation of the current national strategy on community preparedness and resilience is creating an effective organizational structure and process at the local level to foster this collaboration between government and civic leaders from all sectors and then using this structure to reach everyone in the community. This collaborative structure is a core element of FEMA's Citizen Corps.

Communicating the importance of personal and community preparedness is a cornerstone of our collective strategy, and creating a culture of preparedness is within reach as we continue to support nationwide resilience efforts.

Research is showing us the success of our strategies, but there is still much more work to be done. We have the opportunity to build upon an American culture of service, citizenship, and responsibility. We must not miss this opportunity to harness and highlight the innumerable acts of kindness taking place in our communities. Citizen Corps is a vehicle for change and, if implemented in your community, can have a profound effect on emergency management and, more importantly, give individuals the power to make a difference.

Appendix A Community and Emergency Preparedness Organizations

GOVERNMENT

The White House

<http://www.whitehouse.gov>

Department of Homeland Security

<http://www.dhs.gov>

Citizen Corps

<http://www.citizencorps.gov>

FEMA

<http://www.fema.gov>

Department of Justice

<http://www.justice.gov>

Department of Health and Human Services

<http://www.hhs.gov>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov>

Corporation for National and Community Service

<http://www.nationalservice.gov>

National Regulatory Commission

<http://www.nrc.gov>

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov>

U.S. Geological Survey

<http://www.usgs.gov>

U.S. State and Local Gateway

<http://www.statelocal.gov>

EMERGENCY MANAGERS

National Emergency Management Association

<http://www.nemaweb.org>

International Association of Emergency Managers

<http://www.iaem.com>

FIRST RESPONDERS

Police

Volunteers in Police Service

<http://www.policevolunteers.org>

International Association of Chiefs of Police

<http://www.theiacp.org>

National Sheriffs' Association

<http://www.sheriffs.org>

<http://www.usaonwatch.org>

National Crime Prevention Council

<http://www.ncpc.org>

Police Executive Research Forum

<http://www.policeforum.org>

Justice Technology Information Network

<http://www.justnet.org>

Fire

International Association of Fire Chiefs

<http://www.iafc.org>

National Volunteer Fire Council

<http://www.nvfc.org>

International Association of Fire Fighters

<http://www.iaff.org>

National Fire Protection Association

<http://www.nfpa.org>

Fire Department Safety Officers Association

<http://www.fdsoa.org>

Appendix A Community and Emergency Preparedness Organizations

Public Health and Emergency Medical Services

Medical Reserve Corps
<http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov>

National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians
<http://www.naemt.org>

National Association of EMS Educators
<http://www.naemse.org>

International Rescue and Emergency Care Association
<http://www.ireca.org>

Volunteer Organizations and Resources

National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster
<http://www.nvoad.org>

American Red Cross
<http://www.redcross.org>

National Safety Council
<http://www.nsc.org>

Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network
<http://www.pointsoflight.org/>

The Salvation Army
<http://www.salvationarmy.org>

Church World Service
<http://www.churchworldservice.org>

United Way
<http://www.unitedway.org>

Network for Good
<http://www.networkforgood.org>

The Independent Sector
<http://www.independentsector.org>

Volunteer Match
<http://www.volunteermatch.org>

Business Associations

U.S. Chamber of Commerce
<http://www.uschamber.com>

The United States Junior Chamber (Jaycees)
<http://www.usjaycees.org>

Appendix B Opportunities for Citizen Corps Volunteers

The following are examples of how citizens can engage in volunteer opportunities that support the efforts of Citizen Corps. This is not a comprehensive list but is intended to give you some ideas for getting your citizens involved. Citizen Corps embraces and promotes all volunteer programs in a community in order to match community members' needs and strengths with programs and opportunities.

COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS (CERT)

- ★ Staff a community education booth at community events.
- ★ Identify safety needs and vulnerable individuals in your neighborhood.
- ★ Distribute disaster education material in your neighborhood, in multiple languages if appropriate.
- ★ Assist with writing and distributing a CERT newsletter.
- ★ Help organize drills, activities, and supplemental training for your team.
- ★ Participate in a speaker's bureau to schools and clubs.
- ★ Help with CERT administrative duties by maintaining databases, helping with class registration, and assisting with class logistics.
- ★ Organize recognition activities for volunteers.
- ★ After CERT training, assist in evacuation, shelter management, donations management, care of responders at fires or emergencies, mass care of victims from a large event, damage assessment, and crowd/perimeter control.

FIRE CORPS

- ★ Support EMS and fire department personnel in administrative tasks such as managing records, doing inventory, maintaining equipment logs, and providing telephone and inquiry support.
- ★ Provide public education and fire prevention and safety tips to community members; additional outreach program activities include support for fundraisers and training banquets.
- ★ Support first responders and responder health needs before and during response, firefighter rehab, and healthy firehouse practices.
- ★ Manage volunteer program and cross-training opportunities within the community.
- ★ Assist emergency management officials and fire departments with installing smoke alarms and other special projects.

MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS

During emergencies, members of the Medical Reserve Corps could:

- ★ Assess and monitor the condition of patients.
- ★ Counsel patients.
- ★ Perform support and management activities (e.g., facilitate patient transfers and/or inventory and distribute pharmaceuticals, supplies, and food).
- ★ Distribute and administer medication.

In non-emergency situations, local agencies could request volunteers to assist them in performing their routine duties. Volunteers could:

- ★ Distribute educational materials about the need for immunizations.
- ★ Give immunizations.
- ★ Assist with health education.

Appendix B Opportunities for Citizen Corps Volunteers

- ★ Provide additional support for community screening efforts (e.g., breast cancer, hypertension, and diabetes).

NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM

- ★ Arrange for home security inspections by crime prevention officers to identify security vulnerabilities.
- ★ Upgrade locks, security hardware, and lighting.
- ★ Train family members to keep valuables secure and to lock windows when leaving home
- ★ Train family members on identifying suspicious behaviors that could indicate terrorist activity
- ★ Ask neighbors to watch for suspicious activity when the house is vacant
- ★ Organize block WATCH groups to assist children, the elderly, and other especially vulnerable persons if they appear to be in distress, in danger, or lost

- ★ Organize meetings with neighborhood groups and trained crime prevention officers to discuss security needs and crime prevention strategies

- ★ Obtain and study informative materials from the National Sheriffs' Association, the National Crime Prevention Council, and local law enforcement agencies

VOLUNTEERS IN POLICE SERVICE (VIPS)

- ★ Take police reports
- ★ Make follow-up telephone calls to victims
- ★ Conduct fingerprinting
- ★ Engage in crowd/parking control at special events
- ★ Participate in search and rescue missions
- ★ Participate in patrols in parking lots at high school football games
- ★ Operate metal detectors at a courthouse
- ★ Serve subpoenas

Appendix C Potential Resources for Citizen Corps Councils

These questions may help you identify resources to support and implement Citizen Corps.

GENERAL

1. Who could champion this initiative in your community? Who might champion it within segments of your community? What is the best way to foster city/county/regional collaboration?
2. What organizations are already active in programs that are relevant to objectives?
3. Which organizations usually sponsor or participate in various events that happen in your community (e.g., days of service, parades, fairs, block parties, speakers, or carnivals)?
4. What federal, state, or non-profit agencies serve your community? Could they provide staff, guidance, or training to participate in Citizen Corps activities?
5. Does a regional planning Council or a related organization include your community within its sphere of interest?
6. What current preparedness activities are in progress in your communities? How can you involve youth organizations such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, or Explorers?
7. Do you have a Volunteer Center in your community where volunteer opportunities can be registered and where you can receive assistance with recruitment efforts? What do you need to do to start one?
8. Is there a state or local VOAD that could provide training and planning assistance for emergency preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery?
9. How can you involve organizations such as the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army that are already active in disaster preparedness and response?
10. Are there courses and programs already being provided in your community by volunteer organizations?
11. What volunteer groups are already active in the community that can be called upon to serve as Citizen Corps Council partners, including community service groups, faith-based groups, and high school civic groups?
12. Is your community served by AmeriCorps volunteers? Does your community have an active Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)?
13. Are there trained and working volunteers with organizations whose missions complement the goals of Citizen Corps? How can you tap into organizations that already recruit, manage, and place volunteers?
14. What other organizations, such as universities, volunteer groups, civic organizations, business councils, and/or faith-based organizations, can be tapped to sponsor volunteer participation or community events?

VOLUNTEER

7. Do you have a Volunteer Center in your community where volunteer opportunities can be registered and where you can receive assistance with recruitment efforts? What do you need to do to start one?

SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

15. Are there colleges, universities, or vocational/technical schools in your community that have sponsored or participated in local preparedness activities?

Appendix C Potential Resources for Citizen Corps Councils

16. Do any of these institutions have curricula or degrees of study programs related to civic administration or emergency management? Do they have an internship program that you could tap to support Council efforts?
17. What other resources might your community's colleges, universities, or vocational/technical schools provide to your Citizen Corps Councils?
18. Do your local high schools incorporate a community service element as part of their graduation requirement? How can you involve high school clubs' members or their leaders in Citizen Corps?
19. Is there a state-level school planning task force?

BUSINESS SECTOR

20. Which businesses in your community have corporate policies that encourage worker participation in community life?
21. Are there businesses in your community that have a good fit with the goals of Citizen Corps, such as insurance companies, security firms, training facilities, or manufacturers of preparedness-kit items?

MEDIA

22. Are there individuals or local celebrities in your community who would be willing to serve as motivational speakers to encourage people to participate?
23. What local media outlets reach your target audiences? Are there outlets to connect with, such as newspapers and their online versions, radio and television stations and their online versions, local bulletins, neighborhood publications, newsletters of organizations in your area, or other specialized media?
24. Which journalists or reporters in your community frequently cover human interest stories or stories on disaster and emergency management?
25. Is there a local weather forecaster or news anchor who could be encouraged to serve as a Citizen Corps Council member?
26. Do any of your council members work for organizations that have an active public affairs department? If so, do they use a commercial service or have a media list that would be suitable for Citizen Corps outreach?



FEMA

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www.citizencorps.gov

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