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Dear Colleague:

Thank you for your commitment to join us in developing the Skagit County Medical Reserve Corps (SCMRC), a program initiated through WA state from federal agencies. I am exceedingly grateful that you are willing to become an SCMRC volunteer. Together, we will establish the SCMRC as a vital part of the county’s effort to improve community health and respond quickly and effectively before, during, and after public health crises. We know our area and our resources.

Most of us experienced the November 2006 flood and the December 2006 and 2008-2009 severe winter storms and the impact they had on Skagit County. We know we may face contagious diseases and natural disasters that may affect our wellness and challenge our local public health. We are responsible for each other in times of disruption. Although the events of September 11, 2001 did not directly affect Skagit County, they painfully demonstrated our vulnerability to crises of all kinds. In such situations we may be isolated from, or unable to draw upon, otherwise available national resources may need to rely heavily upon the skills of county residents.

You have skills and experience that are vital to public health preparation for and response to crisis. And, when many cannot afford health care, your support of prevention efforts, such as vaccinations, is especially valuable. By enrolling in the SCMRC, you have shown your willingness to use your skill--in the company of other committed health professionals--to the greater benefit of our community.

We know your contribution of time and talent to the SCMRC will benefit our county and for that we are heartily thankful. We hope your participation will be rewarding to you as well. As we move forward, if you have any suggestions for improving the program or enhancing its effectiveness, please contact me. As with other important public undertakings, we need to assess continually how we are doing and how we can do better.

Peter Browning
Director, Skagit County Public Health Department
Washington State
About this Handbook

Your enrollment and orientation are important first steps to an exciting and complex organization, which offers a variety of opportunities to serve our community. The following pages describe the benefits to our volunteers, plus policies and procedures that provide a framework for the services we deliver.

The information in this handbook is extensive but not complete. Each position has policies and procedures specific to the function you will perform.

You will learn much of the information regarding your responsibilities on the job. If you have any questions along the way, please contact us at (360) 419-7645.

Please take the time to read this handbook carefully. Keep it as a reference source to use when you have questions or concerns.

Thank you for your help in making Skagit County a safer and healthier place to live! We wish you a rewarding experience as a Medical Reserve Corps volunteer.

Region I Blaze
What is the Medical Reserve Corps?

The Medical Reserve Corps (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. MRC is a partner program of Citizen Corps, a national network of volunteers dedicated to ensuring homeland security. Citizen Corps, along with the Corporation for National and Community Service, and the Peace Corps are all part of the President’s USA Freedom Corps, which promotes volunteerism and service throughout the nation.

MRC units are community-based and function as a way to locally organize and utilize volunteers – medical professionals and others – who want to donate their time and expertise to promote healthy living throughout the year and to prepare for and respond to emergencies. MRC volunteers supplement existing local emergency and public health resources. There are currently over 850 local MRC units, in all 50 states, and even some territories like Guam and Puerto Rico.

MRC volunteers include medical and public health professionals such as physicians, nurses, pharmacists, dentists, veterinarians, and epidemiologists. Other community members, such as interpreters, chaplains, office workers and legal advisors, can fill other vital support positions. Everyone can do their part.

To learn more about the MRC and their mission, please visit their website at www.medicalreservecorps.gov
The Skagit County Medical Reserve Corps (SCMRC) applied for unit status in early 2006 and was officially formed on December 11, 2006. Our local unit was founded in order to contribute to existing emergency response efforts in the community. Skagit County faces a range of natural disasters, such as flooding, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, as well as infectious disease outbreaks and acts of terrorism. The SCMRC, along with its partner organizations, help make sure everyone is prepared and accounted for.

Since its inception, the SCMRC has been active in responding to local needs. Our volunteers have helped during the 2006 November flood season, the 2008-09 severe winter storm, as well as a range of other public health issues.

In June 2007, the fourth week of June was officially declared Skagit County Medical Reserve Corps Week. We are particularly active during this week, which helps raise awareness and participation in local emergency preparedness and response efforts.
Skagit County Medical Reserve Corps

Mission Statement

The mission of the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) is to allow local volunteer medical, health, and non-medical professionals to contribute their skills and expertise throughout the year as well as during times of community need. Our Medical Reserve Corps unit is made up of volunteers who can assist our community during emergencies, such as an earthquake, influenza pandemic, a chemical spill, or an act of terrorism.

Benefits to the Community

Major local emergencies can overwhelm the capability of first responders, especially during the first 12-72 hours. Having citizens who are prepared to take care of themselves, their families and others during times of crisis will allow first-responders to focus their efforts on the most critical, life threatening situations. An organized, well-trained Medical Reserve Corps unit means that volunteers can effectively respond to an emergency, are familiar with their community’s response plan, know what materials are available for their use, know who their partners in the response are, and know where their skills can be utilized to their best advantage and in a coordinated manner.

An Organized Team Approach

During an emergency, Skagit County communities will activate their Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans (CEMP’s). These plans define how emergency personnel (fire, law enforcement, emergency medical services) will respond to and manage the emergency. Spontaneous volunteers may hinder rescue efforts because they may not be familiar with local plans or procedures. By creating a Medical Reserve Corps unit that is linked to our counties CEMP, the members of the Medical Reserve Corps can truly benefit the community by knowing what their role is during an emergency, how they fit into the emergency plan, and how best to respond so that they are a positive support structure for the first responders.
Background

Skagit County has experienced a number of disasters over the years, including the November 2006 flood and the 2008-2009 winter storm. Furthermore, earthquakes and other natural disasters can cause areas of Skagit County to become isolated from the mainland.

The attacks on September 11, 2001 demonstrate how quickly our communities can become isolated, not only from the Puget Sound metropolitan areas, but also from our community partners in preparedness, the military. On September 11, every military base in the world was dedicated to protect and prepare for additional terrorist attacks. Until the nation knew what might come next, this protective action meant we could not help each other as we do on a day-by-day basis.

In response to September 11 and other natural disasters, the Skagit County Medical Reserve Corps was created to meet the need for the development of a community response structure. The Department of Emergency Management and the Skagit County Public Health Department have partnered to develop the Skagit County Medical Reserve Corps by:

1. Recruiting volunteers (both health professionals and support staff) from various health disciplines, including retired medical professionals, RNs, LPNs, paramedics, veterinarians, pharmacists and other health professionals.

2. Partnering with local hospitals, large and small tribal clinics, EMS, and the public health community to develop medical command and control procedures and pre-positioned sites for medical volunteers to establish and manage when requested through Emergency Support Function (ESF) 8 under local County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans (CEMP).

3. Pre-registering all MRC volunteers as Washington State Emergency Workers (this registration will also assist with liability issues).

4. Developing a training and exercise program for volunteers.
Results and Benefits Expected

Donna Smith, LERC, SCMRC Manager

Recruitment for the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) is community based. The recruitment process is not limited to physicians and nurses. It is inclusive of all volunteers interested in providing care in a disaster. This includes licensed medical professionals, those in administrative roles and individuals interested in learning how to fill support roles. Skagit County MRC is designed to use local health professionals within the community and accommodates the volunteers’ schedules. The Skagit County MRC is also recruiting individuals who may not be medical professionals, but would like to work in a medical environment in times of crisis. That would include support staff for mass inoculation sites, alternate care sites and other locations that the MRC may be activated to assist.

The SCMRC is incorporated into both the local county Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) through Emergency Support Function (ESF) 8 and the Department of Emergency Management’s Operations Center Plans. We work in partnership with all the Emergency Management agencies in the County: Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), American Red Cross – Anacortes-San Juan Chapter, the Department of Emergency Management (DEM), and other MRC units in neighboring counties. All emergency and disaster-related functions of the MRC will be initiated through ESF 8, and provide new volunteer opportunities within the public health system. The MRC will enhance and improve the emergency medical response capacity in the community. The program will enhance Skagit County’s ability to respond to either a natural hazard or a terrorism event and be the designated volunteer corps utilized to manage public health emergencies, smallpox clinics, mass casualty incidents (MCI) distribution of the strategic national stockpile, plus the overflow treatment areas and field hospitals as needed in a terrorism event or natural disaster. With pre-planning, pre-identification of treatment sites, and pre-identified, certified, and trained volunteers, a safe, rapid, and effective service will be available in a major emergency or disaster.
**General Information**

**Volunteer Assignments**

Volunteer applications will go through the Skagit County Health Department and the Department of Emergency Management. SCMRC may pre-assign volunteers in advance of emergencies and public health activities. Volunteers may be assigned to specific geographic locations to respond to emergencies so that they may be close to home or place of employment.

Some of the sites and positions that MRC will be called upon to work are:

- Manage Neighborhood Distribution Centers/Points of Distribution (specified locations to support a mass vaccination strategy) with National Vaccine Stockpile
- Provide surge support at hospitals, alternate care facilities, triage centers
- Staff shelters, phone banks, screening stations.
- Support patient reception areas at mass casualty incidents

**Training**

In order to become an active volunteer, you must complete the following:

- Complete enrollment application and background check form.
- Attend an SCMRC Orientation (30 minutes)
- Complete two online courses (also offered in class) within 1st year:
  - ICS-100a – (Incident Command System)
  - NIMS-700a – (National Incident Management System)
- Have current CPR and First Aid training

In January 2011, we will ask all our volunteers to receive CERT training. Proof that you have understood the MRC Core Competencies (see page 10) is required if volunteers seek to go beyond the local level.

**Access to Incident Sites**

The Department of Emergency Management will issue Washington State Emergency Worker Cards to volunteers, which you must have with you in order to be admitted to an incident site.

**Volunteer Safety**

Volunteers will receive safety training appropriate to their function in the SCMRC unit. A Safety Officer will be on site during any major disaster, however, volunteers should understand that personal safety is everyone’s responsibility during a disaster.
Maintaining Readiness

Regular training exercises are an essential element for ensuring readiness. Being ready to respond in an emergency does not just happen—readiness requires planning, organization and practice. Skagit County Medical Reserve Corps has regular meetings and drills to ensure maximum emergency preparedness.

All Medical Reserve Corps volunteers must have appropriate education, training and experience. Not all members of the MRC unit need the same education and training, although there are some common elements.

Preparedness is each individual’s responsibility. Ensuring you are prepared at home and at work will allow you to be ready to respond when you are needed. Your local Department of Emergency Management has free information that can help you prepare for all hazards.

You may also check the Department of Emergency Management website at www.doh.wa.gov/phem/factsheets.htm and the Skagit County Health Department website at http://www.skagitcounty.net for more information on emergency preparedness.

Volunteer Compensation

Volunteer time is uncompensated. However, SCMRC volunteers will receive, as needed:

- Education and training
- Personal protective equipment
- All necessary supplies (gloves, syringes, bandages, etc.)
- Food and shelter
- Communication equipment

Updates & Communication

All volunteers receive periodic email updates that include information about training and exercises as well as opportunities they may be interested in. Volunteers are encouraged to communicate with the coordinator whenever necessary.

We are in the process of getting all our volunteers registered into the MyStateUSA program, which allows the local MRC office and Emergency Management to quickly contact all volunteers within minutes during a disaster, when every minute counts.

Our website (www.skagitcounty.net/scmrc) is updated as often as possible and includes information about trainings. We will also send out a monthly newsletter to all our volunteers, informing you about recent activities, upcoming events, and more.
Core Competencies for MRC Volunteers

Below are the Core Competencies for MRC Volunteers, determined at the national level. These competencies are covered in the MRC Orientation, available at least every other month. We encourage all active members of a Medical Reserve Corps unit, at a minimum, be able to:

1. Describe the procedure and steps necessary for the MRC member to protect health, safety, and overall well-being of themselves, their families, the team, and the community.

2. Document that the MRC member has an existing personal and family preparedness plan.

3. Describe the chain of command (e.g., Emergency Management Systems [EMS], Incident Command Systems (ICS), NIMS), MRC integration, and its application to a given incident.

4. Describe the local MRC unit’s role in public health and/or emergency response and its application to a given incident.

5. Describe the MRC member’s communication role(s) and processes with response partners, media, general public, and others.

6. Describe the impact of an event on the mental health of the MRC member, responders, and others.

7. Demonstrate the MRC member’s ability to follow procedures for assignment, activation, reporting, and deactivation.

8. Identify limits to skills, knowledge, and abilities as they pertain to MRC role(s).
Liability

The State of Washington provides liability protection to volunteers who are registered as emergency workers and are working (and deployed) under a mission number. This is similar to workmen’s compensation and also provides protection against loss or damage to personal property during an activation. It also provides liability protection for volunteers who are working within the scope of their training and not being grossly negligent or operating with willful and wanton misconduct.

WAC 118-04, [http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=118-04](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=118-04) & RCW 38.52, [http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=38.52&full=true#38.52.005#38.52.005](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=38.52&full=true#38.52.005#38.52.005) provide these protections. Please go on-line to view these bills and review the laws.

Also, below, you will find a link to the **Retired Volunteer Medical Worker Program**, which provides information regarding “health care providers, regulations for professional practice and contact information to put you in touch with people who can help answer your questions” regarding Retired Volunteer Worker liability:

- [http://www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/Professions/RetiredMedicalWorker/default.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/Professions/RetiredMedicalWorker/default.htm)

Policies

Harassment-Free Environment

The Skagit County Medical Reserve Corps (SCMRC) is committed to providing a harassment and discrimination free work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to a professional atmosphere that promotes equal opportunities and prohibits discriminatory practices, including harassment. Harassment based on income, race, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, marital status, disability, veteran status or any other basis is strictly prohibited.

Any harassment, whether verbal or physical, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. It is the intent that all SCMRC volunteers work in an environment free of discrimination and/or harassment by another employee, supervisor or volunteer for any reason. Discriminatory conduct in any form undermines morale and interferes with productivity under already stressful conditions.

Discrimination

The SCMRC is committed to eradicating all discrimination in the workplace and specifically condemns sexual harassment of county employees and volunteers by other county employees or volunteers. If you feel you may have been the subject of discrimination or harassment, you should contact the MRC Coordinator or DEM Administrator. Any reports of discrimination or harassment will be examined impartially and resolved promptly. The SCMRC undertakes its responsibility to prevent workplace harassment seriously.

Safety

Providing a clean, safe and healthful work environment is a goal of the SCMRC, but you have a responsibility to protect your own safety as a crisis responder. No job is considered so important or urgent that volunteers cannot take time to perform their job safely.

During your job site orientation, your supervisor will discuss all the appropriate safety and health rules with you. If you are unclear about any safety policies and procedures, ask your supervisor or volunteer manager.

As a MRC volunteer, you have a responsibility for your own safety and health. This includes using all required safety devices. You must also notify your supervisor of any physical conditions such as drowsiness due to medication, illness or emotional strain, which may affect your performance and safety.

You are expected to immediately report all work-related accidents, injuries, illnesses and near misses to your supervisor or volunteer manager. Paperwork and an injury assessment are due at the time of injury to secure benefits. If injured, the volunteer will need to fill out form EMD-084 (available at DEM website – see Helpful Websites page) and turn it into the Skagit County Department of Emergency Management, who will review it, sign it, and submit it to the state.
Drug-Free Workplace

The SCMRC is dedicated to a safe, healthy and drug-free work environment—a clear response to assuring wellness. All MRC volunteers are expected to report to work free from drug and/or alcohol impairment and to remain at work in a condition that enables them to perform their job duties in a safe, efficient, legal and professional manner. Skagit County encourages volunteers who may have an alcohol and/or drug problem to voluntarily seek evaluation and treatment that will lead to successful rehabilitation. Volunteers must abide by the provisions of this policy as a condition of volunteer service.

Violation-Free Work Environment Policy

The SCMRC is committed to our volunteer’s safety and health. This policy has been developed to help ensure a safe workplace and to reduce the risk of violence.

The MRC does not tolerate any type of acts or threats of violence committed by or against a volunteer, and therefore prohibits workplace violence and the possession of weapons by volunteers on the job and at the worksite.

In order to ensure a safe working environment, the SCMRC prohibits all persons from carrying a handgun, firearm, or weapon of any kind on assignments, regardless of whether the person is licensed to carry the weapon or not. This policy applies to all volunteers, clients, customers and visitors. All volunteers are also prohibited from carrying or using a weapon while in the course and scope of performing their job, whether they are on our property at the time or not. This policy also prohibits weapons at any Medical Reserve Corps sponsored function, such as training missions, parties or any other events.

The only exceptions to this policy are police officers, private security guards, or military personnel employed by federal or state government, who are engaged in official duties and persons who have been given written consent by their supervisor or the director to carry a weapon while performing specific tasks on behalf of the Citizen Corps.

If you feel threatened, you should retreat and request intervention from a supervisor or other available management staff. If fear of violence is imminent, contact 911.

Commitment to Diversity

The SCMRC is committed to respecting and honoring all people, regardless of gender, age, race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, physical ability, socioeconomic status, and religion.

Our Emblem

The Medical Reserve Corps will be a recognized emblem that must be used in a standard form. There are guidelines that include color, placement, font and size. T-shirts will be issued to all credentialed MRC volunteers in Skagit County, in order to be easily identified in the field.
Code of Conduct

In an effort to maintain the high standard of conduct that is expected of MRC members, the SCMRC operates under the Citizen’s Corps’ Code of Conduct. It requires that SCMRC volunteers refrain from:

- Using the name, emblem, endorsement, services, or property of the SCMRC to the benefit or advantage of any person.

- Accepting or seeking any financial advantage or gain of other than nominal value that may be offered because of affiliation with the SCMRC.

- Publicly using any SCMRC affiliation to promote partisan politics, religious matters, or positions on any issue not in conformity with the official positions of the Citizen Corps.

- Disclosing personal and confidential SCMRC information available solely as a result of the volunteer’s affiliation with the SCMRC. The County has one official spokesperson.

Operating or acting in any manner that is contrary to the best interests of the SCMRC.

Performance

Volunteers are expected to comply with the policies, procedures, and standards of the Corps as explained at the beginning of their assignment, at the volunteer orientation and in the volunteer handbook.

If a supervisor is dissatisfied with a volunteer’s performance, the first course of action is to communicate that concern to the volunteer. If they are unable to reach an understanding, the director will resolve the matter. In most cases, a volunteer will be given sufficient time to respond affirmatively or request reassignment to a more suitable placement. In some cases, however, immediate action may be required depending upon the severity of the issue.

Electronic Communications

Skagit County’s electronic communication systems, including telephones, e-mail, voice mail, faxes and Internet, are available to conduct county business in a timely manner. All communications are to be professional and appropriate and users are prohibited from using electronic communications for the solicitations of funds, political messages, harassing messages or personal use. Furthermore, all electronic data are the property of the local jurisdiction and may be considered public records.
Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

As a volunteer, you are entitled to receive all the training and preparation required for you to feel comfortable in meeting SCMRC core competencies. To this end, SCMRC will provide you with the following:

- Appropriate training and preparation
- Assignments that utilize and develop your skills (to the best of our ability)
- Clear and specific directions about your assignment
- The opportunity to offer feedback and ask questions
- The expectation of regular feedback on your work
- Appropriate equipment and supplies
- A respectable working environment

Volunteers expect, and enjoy, certain rights when they donate their time. Volunteers, however, also have specific responsibilities to the Medical Reserve Corps. As a volunteer, you are free to set your own work schedule, but you must be prepared to fulfill the commitments you make, which include the following:

- Be dependable, reliable, and businesslike, and abide by the policies of the SCMRC
- Dress appropriately for the setting and the task at hand
- Carry out duties in a safe and responsible way
- Maintain patient and victim confidentiality
- Keep track of volunteer hours accurately
- Work within the guidelines of your job description
- Be responsive to supervision
- Offer feedback and suggestions
- Be prepared to attend any scheduled meetings
- Represent the MRC appropriately within the community
Keep the Ball Rolling

There are many ways you can help maintain and build an effective and valuable Skagit County Medical Reserve Corps. Some to consider:

- Suggest training opportunities for you and your MRC colleagues.
- Identify funding sources and help us prepare grant applications for continuation funds.
- Help us research and modify our approaches based on other successful County models. These can be found on the national Medical Reserve Corps web site.
- Contact our Washington representatives to seek their support in sustaining the SCMRC and ensuring our effectiveness. Funding is most frequently made available following crises to help communities recover from emergency events. It is more challenging, yet still very important, to provide adequate financial support for activities and services that ensure appropriate pre-event preparation.
- Explain the Skagit County Medical Reserve Corps to other professionals in our community and encourage them to get information and to consider participating themselves. We all know that word-of-mouth works well at the community level. Please invite others to join our work!

Please check the SCMRC link on the Skagit County website to keep in touch with both national and local program developments. The SCMRC operates with the support of the entire Department of Public Health Staff—always working to make Skagit County a safer and healthier place!

Some 2007 Skagit County Public Health Department Staff—Daily, we work in the Field!
Helpful Websites

Skagit County Medical Reserve Corps – [www.skagitcounty.net/scmrc](http://www.skagitcounty.net/scmrc)

Medical Reserve Corps (National site) – [www.medicalreservecorps.gov](http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov)


National Connection for Local Public Health – [www.naccho.org](http://www.naccho.org)


United General Hospital – [www.unitedgeneral.org](http://www.unitedgeneral.org)

Skagit Valley Hospital – [www.skagitvalleyhospital.org](http://www.skagitvalleyhospital.org)

Island Hospital – [www.islandhospital.org](http://www.islandhospital.org)

American Red Cross – [www.mtbakerredcross.org](http://www.mtbakerredcross.org) or [www.anacortessanjuan.redcross.org](http://www.anacortessanjuan.redcross.org)

Link to ICS-100a – [http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/IS100A.asp](http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/IS100A.asp)

Link to NIMS-700a – [http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is700a.asp](http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is700a.asp)

H1N1 Info: [http://www.flu.gov/psa/#calltoaction](http://www.flu.gov/psa/#calltoaction)