

Mobile Medical Reserve Corps seeking volunteers

MOBILE, Ala. -- Two orientation sessions are planned in December for those interested in joining the Mobile Medical Reserve Corps. Established in 2011, MRC is a national network of community-based units created to help meet emerging public health needs.

The MRC team is made up of medical and non-medical volunteers who supplement existing responders in times of emergency.

The next orientation sessions are Saturday, Dec. 8, and Tuesday, Dec. 11 in Mobile. The Dec. 8 event is planned for 9 a.m. at the Mobile County Health Department's downtown location, 251 N. Bayou St. The Dec. 11 session will be held at 5:30 p.m. at Mobile's American Red Cross headquarters, 35 N. Sage Ave. For more information or to register, call 251-544-2196 or visit MobileMRC.org.

The MRC provides the structure needed to identify, train and activate medical and public health volunteers, said Elizabeth Williams, who oversees the local MRC program at the Mobile County Health Department.

Hurricane Sandy, the storm that killed more than 100 and knocked out power and other vital services to millions in the Northeast, Williams said, is a recent example of the importance of being prepared and having trained volunteers ready to respond when activated.

Most recently, the Mobile MRC was activated by the Emergency Operations Center in Mobile County during Hurricane Isaac to assist and support mass care shelters managed by the Red Cross. Williams said the event highlighted the need for medical volunteers to support shelter operations, particularly medical care and oversight during the first 48 hours.

As of November, there were 986 MRC units and more than 206,000 volunteers throughout the U.S. Activities include providing first aid services at community events, taking part in mass vaccination exercises, participating in community disaster drills and training with local emergency response partners.