



# The MRC Reporter

Newsletter for the  
Sonoma County Medical Reserve Corps

## Program Updates

Greetings to all!

The primary mission of the Sonoma County Medical Reserve Corps has been to recruit and train health care professionals for staffing mass vaccination and prophylactic medication dispensing sites in the event of a public health emergency.

As the MRC enters its fourth year, our mission is expanding to include providing emergency surge personnel in the event of a large health emergency. We are working with our planning partners (hospitals, clinics, skilled nursing facilities, etc.) to define volunteer roles and explore ways that

MRC volunteers can contribute to the overall health of our community.

To support our expanded mission, recent drills and exercises have focused on triage training and full-scale exercises with local hospitals. Learn more about these events in "MRC Volunteers in Action," where you can read about the trainings and exercises held during the past year, along with other community events that have been keeping our volunteers busy since last spring.

You are familiar with the mass dispensing site model, but may have questions about this dispensing method. In his column  
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Volume 4, Issue 1  
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**The MRC Reporter  
is Live!**

You can now access  
The MRC Reporter  
online!

[www.sonoma-county.org/mrc](http://www.sonoma-county.org/mrc)

For volunteers who use email, you will receive an email notifying you that the latest issue is available on our website. We will continue to send printed newsletters to volunteers without email addresses.

Electronic distribution of the newsletter results in cost reductions to our volunteer program, makes us more environmentally friendly, and allows quicker access to information about activities and upcoming events.

We encourage all volunteers to obtain a free web-based email account. It's simple to use, easy to access, and is a great tool for receiving up-to-the-minute information about the MRC!

## Message from the Deputy Health Officer

Many of you have had the opportunity to join us in one or more of our dispensing site exercises. As you may have seen, it takes many people to get one up and running. Below are a few questions that have come up.

**Q: Do mass dispensing sites really work?**

A: Yes! At the beginning of every large-scale operation, such as setting up a mass dispensing site, the first hour or so is a little chaotic.

However, as MRC volunteers and staff settle into their roles and follow the chain of command, a smooth rhythm ensues.

**Q: How do roles get assigned at a mass dispensing sites?**

A: In general, we do our best to match your skills with the needs in the context of what is most important for the operation as a whole. However, the tasks you are assigned may require a lower skill level than you have been trained for in order to get the necessary job done. Or, you may be assigned and re-assigned to different roles, depending upon what is needed at the time. Remember, ALL roles are important for the overall success of the operation.

**Q: How can I prepare ahead of time for duty at a dispensing site?**

A: One thing that you can do is learn as much as you can about the incident command/incident management system. For example, you can take the National Incident Management online course (NIMS 700 An Introduction). See "Emergency Preparedness Training and Resources"

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## MRC Volunteers in Action

### Drills and Exercises

Post Office Anthrax Exercise: On October 19, 2006, several MRC nurses from the Petaluma/Cotati area participated in an evening exercise to test Public Health's role in the anthrax exposure response plan.

In the event of an actual anthrax exposure at the North Bay post office processing center, Public Health is responsible for setting up a nearby dispensing site for exposed postal employees. MRC volunteers practices staffing the site and dispensing "medication."

Thank you to those of you who were able to attend!

November Hospital Exercise: Last October, over 60 MRC volunteers attended our START (Simple Triage and Rapid Treatment) triage training.

The START system involves making a rapid assessment of every patient, determining in which of four categories patients should be placed, and clearly identifying the categories for medical staff that will treat the patients.

Following this training, many MRC volunteers were able to participate in the November countywide hospital exercise where they practiced their triage skills at three local hospitals - Palm Drive, Santa Rosa Memorial and Sonoma Valley.

Homeless Count Flu Shot Clinic Exercise: On January 31, 2007, Public Health and 14 MRC volunteers participated in a public health preparedness exercise and flu shot clinic during the annual homeless count. This was the first time a Public Health-sponsored flu shot clinic was offered to the homeless during this annual event.

At the Santa Rosa site, over 200 homeless folks came through the facility, and MRC volunteers administered 87 flu shots.

Thank you to those of you who were able to participate. Your participation made it possible for these folks to receive free flu shots and at the same time helped Public Health practice our preparedness plans.

April Hospital Flu Pandemic Exercise: As part of our preparedness activities Public Health conducted four days of exercises and drills focused on a possible flu pandemic.

As MRC volunteers, you were invited to participate because you might be called upon to provide emergency staffing at our local hospitals during an actual flu epidemic.

To test this plan, on April 12th, day four of flu pandemic exercise, MRC volunteers attended pandemic flu preparedness drills held at all seven county hospitals.

Although each hospital was responsible for designing and conducting its own exercise/drill, all hospitals participated in testing our new standardized MRC licensing and credentialing procedure.

### Community Clinic and Education Programs

Flu Shot Clinics: For a third year, in collaboration with the Sonoma County Flu Task Force, we planned and staffed countywide Flu Shot Saturday clinics, integrating MRC volunteers with staff from other community health agencies.

This year, 44 MRC volunteers filled 56 scheduled slots, worked at 14 clinics at 7 locations around the county over 2 days, and gave flu shots to nearly 3,000 people.

Because of your generous contribution of time and effort, 290 combined work hours were donated to our community. Thank you again, to all for a job well done!

#### MRC Reporter Staff

Gabrielle Trubach, MA  
MRC Coordinator

Angela Kelley  
Editor, Desktop Publisher

Ann Baechler, RN, BSN  
PHP Nurse Coordinator

Leigh Hall, MD  
Deputy Health Officer

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MRC Volunteers in Action continued...

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Hand Hygiene/Respiratory Hygiene Program for the Schools: For the 2006/2007 flu season, 7 MRC nurses visited a total of 18 elementary schools in Sonoma County and presented our respiratory hygiene program to over 3,100 children.

A special thank you to the MRC nurses who presented this program: Marian Avilla-Hamann, June Biava, Barbara Briggs-Letson, Mary Dixon, Jeannette Doyel, Lynette Hernandez-Silva, and Linda Sotto.

This continues to be a very popular program. We are still getting requests from schools, and even other counties, about our program!

Keeping this in mind, next years planning meeting will be in September. Mark your calendars!

**Training**

The following are some tips from our recent March 20th "Disaster Mental Health" training. In attendance were MRC volunteers and community mental health professionals. If you were not able to attend, please check our training website:

[www.redwoodregionaltraining.org](http://www.redwoodregionaltraining.org)

to see when these courses will be offered again.

Mental Health Issues Related to Disasters (Psychological First Aid) presented by David F. Wee, MSSW, LCSW.

In this course participants learned several disaster counseling skills and techniques for dealing with the public during an emergency. Two intervention techniques were introduced:

**1. SURE**

**Support** - provide something tangible  
**Understanding** - ask questions to elicit more information

**Reassurance** - distress subsides with time, talk, and tears

**Encouragement** - encourage positive behavior, resiliency, and hope

**2. Detect, Direct, Protect, Connect**

**Detect** - ask who, what, when, where, how?

**Direct** - provide structure and direction

**Protect** - from additional stressful situations

**Connect** - to social networks for support

For more in depth information on "psychological first aid" you can download your own copy of the Medical Reserve Corps Adaptation of the Psychological First Aid (PFA), Field Operations Guide at our website: [www.sonoma-county.org/mrc](http://www.sonoma-county.org/mrc).

Introduction to Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) for Disaster Responders presented by Kim Aufenhauser, MA, EMT.

This course reviewed the basics of CISD and described why it is an essential tool in supporting disaster service workers, MRC volunteers, and emergency responders following a critical incident. Components of CISD are based on specialized peer-counseling techniques of "defusing" and "debriefing." Defusing is a informal process that is usually done in the field to help validate and normalize the worker's experience, while debriefing is a more formal and structured process led by trained counselors some two or three days later.

**Related Websites**

**Sonoma County MRC**  
[www.sonoma-county.org/mrc](http://www.sonoma-county.org/mrc)

**Sonoma County Public Health Preparedness**  
[www.sonoma-county.org/phpreparedness](http://www.sonoma-county.org/phpreparedness)

**National MRC**  
[www.medicalreservecorps.gov](http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov)

**US Dept. of Homeland Security**  
[www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

**Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**  
[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

**Sonoma Chapter of the American Red Cross**  
[www.sonomacounty.redcross.org](http://www.sonomacounty.redcross.org)

**American Red Cross**  
[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

**The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

**Governor's Office of Emergency Services**  
[www.oes.ca.gov](http://www.oes.ca.gov)

**California Emergency Medical Services Authority**  
[www.emsa.ca.gov](http://www.emsa.ca.gov)

**California Emergency Preparedness Office**  
[www.dhs.ca.gov/epo](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/epo)

**San Francisco Office of Emergency Services**  
[www.72hours.org](http://www.72hours.org)

**CARD (Collaborating Agencies Responding to Disasters)**  
[www.firstvictims.org](http://www.firstvictims.org)



Do you have a question about the MRC program? Email it to us at:

dhs-mrc@sonoma-county.org

## Targeted Dispensing: Q&A

By Dawn Flamenco, Administrative Aide, and Christine Love, Program Planning Analyst

One of Public Health's key responsibilities in a health disaster is to plan for the protection of the community by providing prophylactic medication in a timely way. You are familiar with the mass dispensing model in which everyone comes to school gyms and vets halls to pick up pills or get vaccinated. As a volunteer, you may have asked yourself a few other questions about dispensing plans:

### Q: Will the MRC only work at a large dispensing site?

A: No. In the event of a public health emergency requiring large-scale prophylaxis, many methods of dispensing may be required to protect people within the recommended timeframe. These operations may be occurring simultaneously and might be located at sites other than the primary large dispensing sites.

For example, dispensing of medication might take place at designated fire stations or at other facilities around the county. This is referred to as "targeted dispensing."

### Q: What is targeted dispensing?

A: Targeting dispensing is Public Health's plan to dispense medications to specific (targeted) groups, or at locations separately from the mass dispensing sites that are open to all of the public.

### Q: Who are the targeted groups?

A: Certain groups, such as first responders or health care providers, may be at greater risk for exposure or more vulnerable to serious illness. Still other groups might be targeted because their service is critical to the community during a disaster.

Targeted dispensing might also be planned with facilities or agencies that serve people who would have difficulty using mass dispensing sites, such as skilled nursing facilities. Public Health may even work with large employers who are willing to dispense to their own staff and families.

In all these cases, medical guidelines will be established by Public Health, in collaboration with federal and state health officials, to determine who should receive prophylaxis and how it should be dispensed. MRC might be asked to assist with dispensing at any of these sites.

We are extremely lucky, and far ahead of many other locales, to have such a robust MRC resource. Your assistance at any of these potential dispensing venues will be essential to quick protection of our community. Look for training and exercising opportunities in the future on targeted dispensing operations.

“Early detection and containment are key in preventing the spread of disease.”

- Participant in April 2007 flu pandemic exercise

# Six Things You Need to Know About Infection Control When Dispensing Medication

By Ann Baechler, RN, MSN, Public Health Preparedness Nurse

1. **Always wear gloves** - standard precautions for blood-borne pathogens must be observed at all times.
2. **Use hand sanitizer** - clean hands with hand sanitizer after each glove change.
3. **Never uncap a syringe using your mouth** - this is not proper technique.
4. **Prefilled syringes should always be refrigerated** - strict temperature control for vaccines is required.
5. **If unsure about immunization technique, ask for training** - a VanishPoint syringe training video is available.
6. **No food at dispensing stations** - instead use designated areas for breaks and snacks.

## Save the Date!

### Thursday, May 3, 2007: Annual Volunteer Recognition Reception

All MRC volunteers are invited to attend the Volunteer Recognition Reception hosted by the Volunteer and Intern Program, Community Involvement Division, County of Sonoma Human Resources Department. This year's program will be held on Thursday, May 3rd, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. in the main auditorium at the Santa Rosa Veterans Memorial Building.



Come enjoy good food, music, and door prizes with many other folks who volunteer for our county. **Please RSVP** to Ann Baechler via email ([abaechle@sonoma-county.org](mailto:abaechle@sonoma-county.org)) or phone (707-565-4579), no later than April 30th, 2007.

Hope you are able to attend!

## MRC Field Guide

The MRC Field Guide summarizes what volunteers need to know when they serve, with topics such as "Prepare Your Family," "Prepare Yourself," "When you Serve," and "Volunteer Participation Levels."

If you weren't able to attend last June's MRC Symposium where we distributed our new MRC Field Guide, or didn't receive yours in the mail from us, you can download your own copy from our website: [www.sonoma-county.org/mrc](http://www.sonoma-county.org/mrc).





## Emergency Preparedness Training and Resources

### FEMA NIMS 700: An Introduction (online course):

NIMS (National Incident Management System) provides a consistent nationwide template to enable all government, private-sector, and nongovernmental organizations to work together during emergencies.

The NIMS 700 course is an introductory course and takes three hours to complete. It explains the purpose, principles, key components and benefits of NIMS. For more course information or to take this course, go to: [www.training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/is700.asp](http://www.training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/is700.asp).

Please note: if you do complete this course we would like to know about it and add this skill to your skill profile on our MRC database.

### COPE Program

Do you want to be more involved in emergency and disaster preparedness in your own neighborhood? There are a couple ways that you can do this. One way is to set up neighborhood COPE (Citizens Organized to Prepare for Emergencies) teams.

The mission of COPE is "to help residents, families, and neighborhoods become better prepared to respond to and recover from emergency situations." The City of Santa Rosa has information on this program as well as a step-by-step guide on its website that you can download. Or, call 707-543-3700 for information.

### CERT Program

Also available is the CERT Program (Community Emergency Response Team) community preparedness training. This training teaches disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact your neighborhood, and covers basic skills that are important to know in a disaster when emergency services are

not immediately available. For example, you will learn basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations.

For a more detailed description of the CERT program check their website at <http://www.citizen corps.gov/cert>.

CERT trainings are periodically offered by several municipalities in Sonoma County:

- Sebastopol: Sebastopol Fire Chief Zanzi at 707-823-8061 or email at [jzanzi@sonic.net](mailto:jzanzi@sonic.net)
- Healdsburg: Healdsburg Fire Department at 707-431-3360 or email Bill Albers at [balbers@ci.healdsburg.ca.us](mailto:balbers@ci.healdsburg.ca.us)
- Petaluma: Bill Hammerman at 707-762-6593

For general information and other county locations and dates, contact Jim Bray, Sonoma County CERT coordinator for the Red Cross at 577-7636 or email him at: [vcjimbray@yahoo.com](mailto:vcjimbray@yahoo.com).

## MRC Program Updates continued...

*(Continued from page 1)*

"Message from the Deputy Health Officer," Dr. Leigh Hall answers common questions about this important tool. You can also learn about other ways we can dispense medication in the column "Targeted Dispensing: Q&A."

The MRC volunteer program continues to grow! We now have a total of 609 MRC volunteers - 53 physicians, 31 pharmacists, 381 nurses (328 RNs, 22 NPs, and 31 LVNs), and 144 technical/support staff. This year, we welcomed over 135 Rotary Club members to the program. Nearly 650 MRC programs are in place across the nation, with 35 programs in California. This adds up to

more than 121,800 MRC volunteers nationwide.

If you missed it last year, please be sure to "Save the Date" for this year's Volunteer Recognition Reception.

Once again, we here at Public Health thank you for all that you have done in the last year that continues to make this a great MRC program. Looking forward to another exciting year!

Regards,  
Gabrielle Trubach, MA  
MRC Coordinator

## Message from the Deputy Health Officer continued...

*(Continued from page 1)*

section on page 6 for more information. The more you know about how dispensing sites are managed, the better prepared you will be should you be called to help staff one.

Another thing you can do is attend our trainings to enhance your skills and knowledge on a variety of related subjects. Check our course information and training schedule at [www.redwoodregionaltraining.org](http://www.redwoodregionaltraining.org), or call

Stephen Rios, our Training and Education Coordinator, at 707-565-4406.

We here at Public Health very much appreciate your willingness to help your community in the event of a public health emergency. We could not do it without you!

Sincerely,  
Leigh Hall, MD





## The MRC Reporter

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Newsletter for the  
Sonoma County Medical Reserve  
Corps

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Fax: 707-565-4411

Website: [www.sonoma-county.org/mrc](http://www.sonoma-county.org/mrc)

### Update Your Profile

Has your **contact information** changed recently? Please let us know how to reach you by completing this form and mailing it to us at:

Sonoma County Medical Reserve Corps  
625 5th Street  
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

**Or update your contact information online at our website:**  
[www.sonoma-county.org/mrc](http://www.sonoma-county.org/mrc)

\_\_\_\_\_  
First Name, Last Name, Credential

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip

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Home Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Work Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Cell Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address

### Please Note: New MRC Volunteer Cancellation Policy

Whenever possible, we ask that you **give us at least 24 hours notice** if, for any reason, you find that you are unable to keep a staffing commitment. This is especially important when signed up for flu shot clinics and community presentations. It is not only us that are counting on your participation, but also our community planning partners.

If you need to cancel, please call 707-565-4427 or email [DHS-MRC@sonoma-county.org](mailto:DHS-MRC@sonoma-county.org).

Thank you!