

# Minnesota Responds

**Benton County Edition**  
**(320) 968-5087**



Central Region Public Health  
Emergency Preparedness  
Newsletter

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## We Need YOU!

### Frequently Asked Questions About MN Responds MRC

MN Responds MRC is a state-wide database of licensed and unlicensed health personnel who would be willing to respond to a Public Health emergency. Register now at [www.mnresponds.com](http://www.mnresponds.com).

#### *Why should I register?*

During times of crisis, it's natural to want to help, but it can be difficult to know what to do or where to go to offer your assistance. When you register on the MN Responds website, you become known as an identified professional resource to your community. Registering does not place you under any obligation to volunteer. You can choose how, when and where you might be available to volunteer.

#### *Is my data private?*

All information collected on the MN Responds web site will be kept private or non-public, as security information under M.S. §13.37.

#### *How does it work?*

You will be notified during an emergency where you are needed. You will be pre-credentialed so there will be no delay in your ability to volunteer. You will be given identification at your site and will be given "just-in-time" training for functions you will be performing. If there is an emergency and you are contacted, you can make your decision about responding at that time. Not volunteering for an emergency doesn't mean that you couldn't for another or that you couldn't volunteer at a later date.

#### *What if my license is expired or I'm retired?*

There are many roles in emergency response that don't require a license. Your training and experience will still be a valuable asset to any emergency response. You will be notified of training opportunities in your county for refresher information and practice.

### Health Professionals Needed

- Nurses
- Physicians
- Nurse Practitioners
- Pharmacists
- Public Health Nurses
- Dentists
- Veterinarians
- Nursing Assistants
- Lab Personnel
- Health Educators
- Respiratory Care Specialists

### Others Needed

- Social Workers
- Mental Health Professionals
- Language interpreters
- Chaplains
- Data Entry Personnel
- Support Staff
- RSVP Volunteers
- Students
- Retired from health field, EMS, fire, law enforcement or related field

## Training

Every emergency will be different, but certain activities may be the same or similar such as where, when and how to report to a site, what identification to carry with you, what you should wear, etc. Future newsletters will address some of these issues. Volunteers may be asked to take an on-line training on the command structure of an emergency response called NIMS. (see box below) "Just In Time" training will occur at the site during an emergency and will prepare you for your assigned tasks.

## Worker's Compensation Protection

Worker's Compensation protections that are provided to regular agency employees should apply to approved volunteers if injury or illness arises during a declared emergency. Worker's Comp protections outside of an emergency vary with the service being performed. Current listing of volunteer coverage in Minnesota Statutes:  
[www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/stats/176/011.html](http://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/stats/176/011.html).

## Volunteer Liability

Volunteers who are accepted by a Minnesota state agency and acting under the direction of that agency are entitled to legal defense and indemnification by the state, just as a paid state employee would receive. Similar protections apply to volunteers accepted by a Minnesota city or county and acting under the direction of that unit of government. The federal government has given certain liability protection to narrow groups of health service providers, as occurred during the national smallpox vaccination program in 2005, under a Homeland Security Act. The Administration is currently considering broader volunteer protections under a program titled Emergency System for Advanced Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals. It is important, therefore, that volunteers pre-register on Minnesota Responds so there is no delay in your ability to help in an emergency.

## Questions/Alternative Registration

If you have questions or would like a paper copy of the registration, contact the Benton County Public Health Emergency Volunteer Coordinator Cynthia Heltunen at (320) 968-5147 or [Cynthia.Heltunen@co.benton.mn.us](mailto:Cynthia.Heltunen@co.benton.mn.us)

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## Public Health Emergencies

Your county and your central region of fourteen counties have been preparing and developing plans for a wide variety of threats to the public's health. Our plans deal with mass dispensing of medications or vaccines, transporting medical supplies from the Strategic National Stockpile to dispensing sites, getting medications to special populations, dealing with potential isolation and/or quarantine situations, coping with the physical movement of people as well as the psychological ramifications of a pandemic event.

If the threat is contagious, volunteers who are considered essential personnel will receive their medication or vaccine so they can perform their jobs without worry about becoming ill. The determination about who will be essential personnel will be made by the federal government and the state at the time of the emergency.



## COMMUNICATION IS KEY

One thing we have learned from fires, hurricanes, floods and other disasters is that all people who respond to an emergency must know the language and the structure of authority. It is now a national mandate that everyone who responds to an emergency take a course on the National Incident Management System (NIMS). You will want to know who is in charge and how things get done when you arrive on a scene as a volunteer. The course is easy, free, and it's on-line. It is available at [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) and is titled ICS100. If you want to know more, take the ICS 200 and 700. Don't forget to register yourself for volunteering at: [www.mnresponds.com](http://www.mnresponds.com).