

# Minnesota Responds



## Central Region

### Central MN Responds MRC

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## VOLUNTEER NEWSLETTER 2011, ISSUE 3

### September - National Preparedness Month

By M. Engvall — Sherburne County

#### 2011 Theme:

*A Time to Remember.*

*A Time to Prepare.*

**September 11, 2001**

*A Time to Remember* — It's been 10 years since airliners smashed into the twin towers in New York City, along with one into the Pentagon, and another in a field in Pennsylvania. I still remember that morning...hearing on the news of the first crash while driving back to work from an early morning meeting. Then, the second plane crashed. "What's happening? Someone find out what's going on?" A small radio in the emergency kit in our office was brought out so all could hear the latest news.

It was an emotion-filled day... hard to think of much, other than "Is my family safe? Are more planes coming? What will happen next?" The news from the radio was not enough. A large group of co-workers decided to go to lunch at any place with televisions where we could see the latest information. It was a long lunch, while we watched the morning's events play out on the large screens.

*A Time to Prepare* — Hurricane Irene, the east coast earthquake, tornadoes in Tuscaloosa and Joplin have all been critical reminders about the importance of preparedness.

Each year National Preparedness Month allows for Minnesota Responds Medical Reserve Corps

volunteers to raise awareness about the importance of being prepared for a wide range of disasters.

September is officially National Preparedness Month. Activities have begun across the country to get the word out to prepare for emergencies.

Are You Ready? As volunteers, we each must be prepared first so that we can be better prepared to help others in an emergency or disaster. As you prepare, please continue to get the word out in your community for others to be prepared for emergencies as well. The more people who are prepared, the better our communities and businesses will be in an emergency, and the easier it will be for them to bounce back after a disaster strikes.

This September: *A Time to Remember. A Time to Prepare.* is intended to:

- Honor Our Professional & Volunteer First Responders.
- Encourage Community Service.
- Reaffirm that Preparedness is a Shared Responsibility.

**Please help to get out this important message.**

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# Operation Thunder

## Mass Dispensing Full Scale Exercise

### **THANK YOU!!!**

*To each and everyone of you who assisted in some way with Operation Thunder. Thank you to those of you who provided valuable assistance behind the scenes, those who served as clients, those who served as staff, and those who helped with the many other tasks in preparation for or during this exercise. Again, THANK YOU!*

Operation Thunder, a full-scale mass dispensing exercise, took place on June 28, 2011, at the Zimmerman High School in Sherburne County. This exercise provided an excellent opportunity for local public health agencies from six counties (Benton, Chisago, Isanti, Sherburne, Stearns, and Wright) to work together to address exercise objectives. Numerous community partners were also involved in this exercise, including the local school district, hospitals, city and county emergency managers representing six agencies, ham radio operators, and Sheriff's reserve officers, along with additional volunteers from Crow Wing, Morrison, Anoka, Hennepin, and Washington counties.

A scenario of anthrax, requiring mass dispensing of medications to community members, was used for Operation Thunder. Approximately 100 volunteers came through as 'clients' to receive simulated medications (either plain or peanut M & M's). The volunteer 'clients' completed the standard forms provided by the Minnesota Department of Health first as themselves and their own family, then based on situation cards that were provided to them. Volunteers continued through the mass dispensing process for approximately one hour.

Operation Thunder started early that Tuesday morning, with the exercise planning team arriving around 8:30 am to get supplies and materials unloaded for the activities of the day. The Site Set-up Team members checked in at

9:00 am, and a test of the site set-up plan began at 9:30 am. Mass dispensing staff began to arrive around 10:00am. Staff attended just-in-time training sessions at 10:30am, with lunch provided at Noon. All staff reported to their designated locations by 1:00 pm in order to make final preparations for the 'clients' for the exercise.

Mass dispensing activities were scheduled to start at 1:30pm. There was a slight delay as the Sheriff's Reserve Officers cleared out protestors. Problem situations are often added to an exercise, but this was a real situation that needed to be handled. Persons were handing out literature against vaccinations to the volunteers who had shown up to participate in the exercise. A special 'Thank You' to the Sherburne County Sheriff's Department staff for handling this unexpected situation.

So what was learned through this exercise?

- We learned we have some **great volunteers** who took time out of their day to help practice for a public health emergency.
- We learned that the Central Region Minnesota Responds MRC volunteers are a valuable resource for mass dispensing; staffing for Operation Thunder mass dispensing activities was filled with 34% volunteers!
- We learned that communications plays a vital role in an exercise, just as it would in a real incident; it was extremely important for staff and community partners to be in communication with each other throughout the exercise in order to identify and work through the issues that occurred.

Operation Thunder was a huge success—not only were exercise objectives met, but it was great to see how well staff from so many agencies worked/responded together.

Again, **THANK YOU!**



She hooked me in again! Marcia asked oh so nicely if I'd be able to help out at Operation Thunder. How could I refuse? Here was an opportunity to see many of the Public Health Nurses I had worked with many years ago and others I had met more recently as a volunteer during the H1N1 vaccine clinics. Plus a day out of the office is always a good thing.

Yes, a day out of the office. I work for the State of Minnesota as a trainer in the Department of Human Services. Coincidentally, Operation Thunder was during the week prior to the shutdown. It was an added benefit to take a vacation day and focus on Operation Thunder instead of what was happening (or not) in state government.

I could tell there had been quite a bit of thought put into the logistics of this event. Even though the actual "administration time" was relatively short, I was able to get a good handle on the procedures and how I fit into the overall scheme. I also appreciated the debrief/hot wash phase where input on what went well and ideas for improvement were given freely.



So what did I do at Operation Thunder? I'm a nurse by education (and former military career), so I was one of the medication administrators. We reviewed the information

on the participants' forms, provided education, and administered medication (M&M's). Tables were spaced far enough apart to maintain as much data privacy as possible. Traffic flow lines were clearly marked. Screening and initial education were done prior to the administration station. Other than the "too much paperwork/writing" complaint, the process went very well.

I was able to connect with my prior contacts, met some new people, and even greeted someone I graduated from high school with that I hadn't seen in over 30 years. I'll volunteer again. And I'll encourage others to consider getting involved with the Minnesota Responds Council. It's worth it!

— Deborah Kreger, RN  
(Deborah served as staff during the Operation Thunder exercise.)



We received emails from MN Responds informing us of an upcoming exercise called Operation Thunder. We decided to participate and be better prepared to help ourselves and others if an emergency like this occurred. Our experience in CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) and MN Responds exercises has helped us to be more aware of potential dangerous situations and has revealed areas in our lives and home in which we are vulnerable. I believe these drills are important learning tools to help work the kinks out of the system. It has also given us the opportunity to make changes and be prepared so we would be available to help in our neighborhood or community following a disaster. One area of weakness in our family that was pointed out from Operation Thunder was not being aware and having a written record of the medicine that each family member is taking – both prescription and non prescription. We also felt that this is good information to share with neighbors and friends.

— Anne and John Nelson  
(Anne and John served as community members coming through for medications during the Operation Thunder exercise.)



Photos on pages 2-3:

- P.2 Bottom: Registration staff ready to go.
- P.3 Left: School gym as set up for mass dispensing.
- P.3 Top above: Lining up outside school.
- P.3 Above: 'Clients' signing waivers.

## Unit Training Schedule

These are the trainings currently scheduled. You can attend any one of these trainings, regardless of location! *Registration is required for all trainings* and some locations have size restrictions so call the individual listed for more details or to register.

### Psychological First Aid

**10/06/2011** 6:30-8:00 p.m. Stearns County Service Center  
Instructor: Nancy Carlson, Minnesota Dept. of Health  
To register: [sally.burg@co.stearns.mn.us](mailto:sally.burg@co.stearns.mn.us) 320-656-6276  
or [cynthia.heltunen@co.benton.mn.us](mailto:cynthia.heltunen@co.benton.mn.us) 320-968-5147

### MN Responds MRC Refresher Training

**10/11/2011** 6:30-8:30pm Sherburne Co Government Center  
Instructor: Marcia Engvall, PHP Coordinator  
To register: [marcia.engvall@co.sherburne.mn.us](mailto:marcia.engvall@co.sherburne.mn.us) 763-765-4103

### Hazmat Awareness & Personal Protective Equipment

**12/06/2011** 6:30-8:00 p.m. St. Cloud Hospital, Riverside Conf.  
Instructor: Dave Miller, NREMT-P  
To register: [sally.burg@co.stearns.mn.us](mailto:sally.burg@co.stearns.mn.us) 320-656-6276  
or [cynthia.heltunen@co.benton.mn.us](mailto:cynthia.heltunen@co.benton.mn.us) 320-968-5147

After a training, whether in person or online, please update your training profile on [www.mnresponds.org](http://www.mnresponds.org) and send a copy of the certificate to your local MRC coordinator!

## Partner Training Schedule

### Disaster Leadership

09/14/2011 9:00-11:00am  
St. Cloud Police Department  
Presenter: Ramona Dohman,  
MN Commissioner of Public Safety  
To register: [empowermn@gmail.com](mailto:empowermn@gmail.com)

### U of M pilot test of cell-phone resources

Topics: Psychological First Aid and Self Care  
09/20/2011 1:30-3:30pm  
Stearns County Service Center  
or  
09/21/2011 9:30-11:30am  
West Bank of the U of M campus  
Space limited.  
For more information,  
email Maggie Truax at [truax031@umn.edu](mailto:truax031@umn.edu)

Now accepting  
**Questions, Comments, and Suggestions**  
for future newsletters!

Please email [tony.buttacavoli@co.isanti.mn.us](mailto:tony.buttacavoli@co.isanti.mn.us)  
and write "MN Responds MRC Newsletter"  
in the subject line.

## Are You Ready? Personal Preparedness (Taken from HSEM)

Being prepared can reduce fear, anxiety, and losses that accompany disasters.  
Get a Kit. Make a Plan. Be Informed.

You may need to survive on your own after an emergency. This means having your own food, water, and other supplies in sufficient quantity to last for a least three days. The following items are recommended for a basic emergency supply kit:

- \* One gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- \* At least a three day supply of non-perishable food
- \* Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert; extra batteries
- \* Flashlight with extra batteries
- \* First aid kit
- \* Whistle to signal for help
- \* Dust mask to help filter contaminated air
- \* Plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- \* Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- \* Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- \* Can opener for food (if kit contains canned foods)
- \* Local map, cell phone with chargers (solar, if available)

For additional information, check the following websites:

- ⇒ <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is22.asp>
- ⇒ <http://www.ready.gov>
- ⇒ <http://www.codeready.org>