

Search



LOGIN

[Forgot Password?](#) [Register](#)[HOME](#)[VOLUNTEER](#)[LEADER](#)[PARTNER](#)[UNITS](#)[Home](#) [Volunteer](#) [Frequently Asked Questions](#) [Volunteering with the MRC](#)[About Volunteering](#)[FAQs](#)[Volunteer Spotlights](#)[Unit Spotlights](#)[Find MRC Units](#)

Enter your zip code to find the nearest unit to you

Volunteering with the MRC

On this page:

- [Why should I become an MRC volunteer?](#)
- [Are there core competencies required to become an MRC volunteer?](#)
- [What training do I need to become an MRC volunteer?](#)
- [What type of training is available for MRC volunteers?](#)
- [Who is liable if I am injured or hurt while serving as an MRC volunteer?](#)
- [What type of background do I need to become an MRC volunteer?](#)
- [Is the MRC volunteer program only for medical or healthcare professionals?](#)
- [What do individuals with a medical or healthcare background do as an MRC volunteer?](#)
- [What do individuals with a non-medical or healthcare background do as an MRC volunteer?](#)
- [Do MRC volunteers only help in disaster time \(during emergency situations\)?](#)
- [How do MRC volunteers help in non-emergency times \(situations\)?](#)
- [Once I become an MRC volunteer, what happens if I am not available all the time?](#)
- [I am interested in becoming an MRC volunteer. What do I do first?](#)

I see many volunteer opportunities with emergency response and preparedness groups. Why should I become an MRC volunteer?

Communities benefit from having MRC volunteers ready to respond to emergencies. People volunteer for many reasons, but some volunteer for the MRC because:

- It's a way to offer their skills that might not have been used before because they were not adequately prepared to be part of the response effort.
- It's a significant benefit to communities because skilled volunteers offer services during the year to augment existing public health efforts or provide emergency backup that would not otherwise be available.
- It's a chance to belong to a group with a strong sense of mission and purpose.
- It's a chance to qualify for special incentives (e.g., free training).

Volunteers are at the very heart of the MRC. The existence of this nationwide, community-based movement is due to the willingness of volunteer medical and public health professionals to serve their communities in times of need. Without that generous offer of service, there would be no MRC.

Are there core competencies required to become an MRC volunteer?

The MRC Program has developed the MRC Core Competencies Matrix, which is a suggested guide for training MRC volunteers at the local level. Core Competencies represent the baseline level of knowledge and skills that all MRC volunteers should have, regardless of their roles within the MRC unit. They also provide a framework for units' training component and assist in describing what communities can expect of their MRCs. Because the core competencies establish only a minimum standard, units may choose to expand on the competencies in order to train volunteers at a more advanced level. Units may also choose to link the MRC core competencies to other existing sets of competencies for health professionals. For more information, please view our [Core Competencies Matrix](#).

What training do I need to become an MRC volunteer?

Emergency preparedness and response is a highly coordinated effort that allows communities to maximize their capabilities during times of extraordinary disorganization and stress. Volunteers may already know how to perform some of the necessary medical and health functions. In most cases, training as an MRC volunteer focuses primarily on learning local emergency and health procedures, trauma response techniques, use of specialized equipment, and other methods to enhance volunteer effectiveness.

Perhaps the most important part of training is learning how to work as a team member. An organized, well-trained MRC unit is familiar with its community's response plan, knows what materials are available, knows its response partners, and knows where its skills can be put to best use in a coordinated manner.

What type of training is available for MRC volunteers?

All MRC volunteers need to undergo some form of orientation to the MRC, which includes an overview of the system in which the MRC's activities occur, whether in relation to emergency response or public health, or both.

Support/administrative volunteers receive guidance on how to perform their particular functions, which vary depending on the needs of particular communities. They may need to participate in practice drills if their duties interface with those of the front-line/direct-service volunteers. Overall, the training includes support skills training, communications, public speaking, and Incident Command System, or other local command systems.

Training requirements for front-line/direct-service volunteers is typically extensive and specialized. Generally, these volunteers receive training in primary emergency response and public health procedures, including basic life support and CPR; Community Emergency Response Team training; identifying the signs, symptoms, and treatment of hazardous materials (including nuclear, biological, and chemical agents); and basic first aid skills to deal with emergencies such as shock, allergic reactions, bleeding, broken bones, burns, chemical splashes, choking, eye injuries, skin wounds, dislocations, head trauma, heat exhaustion, stroke, and poisoning.

Who is liable if I am injured or hurt while serving as an MRC volunteer?

Liability protection standards require volunteer-based organizations to train their volunteers in accordance with all policies and procedures, particularly those intended to reduce the incidence of harm. Different localities are subject to different legal liability laws and standards. All volunteer organizations want to protect their volunteers; liability protection for volunteers is an advocacy issue and a reasonable concern for many MRC units.

Liability also is a highly complex area of the law, compounded by innumerable differences at the local level. Understanding and interpreting liability is based on individual cases and varied interpretations of the statutes in specific states. Because the rules and laws vary, it is not possible for the MRC Program Office to provide information applicable to all 50 states and to all jurisdictions within them. Even within a specific jurisdiction and given a specific set of facts, no one can predict with certainty whether a liability suit will succeed.

State offices may provide information about its liability rules. Some states offer

greater protection to medical volunteers than others. Additionally, some response partners may be able to extend the liability and workers compensation privileges that normally apply to regular workers.

What type of background do I need to become an MRC volunteer?

The MRC program seeks volunteers to assist with emergency preparedness and response efforts. Volunteers in the MRC program include:

- Practicing, retired, or otherwise employed medical professionals, such as doctors, nurses, emergency medical technicians, pharmacists, nurses' assistants, and others.
- Public health professionals.
- Community members without medical training can assist with administrative and other essential support functions.

United States citizenship is not required to be part of the MRC. Non-citizen, legal U.S. residents also are welcome to volunteer and contribute their time, knowledge, and skills to protecting and improving their communities.

[back to top](#)

Is the MRC volunteer program only for medical or healthcare professionals?

No. The MRC program seeks medical and public health professionals to assist with emergency preparedness and response efforts. However, other volunteers who have no medical or healthcare backgrounds also are needed to properly conduct emergency preparedness and response efforts. Community members without medical training can assist with administrative and other essential support functions. These volunteers give their time on an ongoing basis in coordination with other experts willing to donate their time and knowledge for special aspects of the effort.

What do individuals with a medical or healthcare background do as an MRC volunteer?

Major emergencies can overwhelm the capabilities of first responders, particularly during the first 12 to 72 hours. Medical and other health volunteers can provide an important "surge" capacity during this critical period. They also can augment medical staff shortages at local medical and emergency facilities. In short, communities often need medically trained individuals to fill in the gaps in their emergency response plans and to improve their response capabilities overall.

Possible types of "front-line" medical and public health volunteers include:

- Physicians (including surgeons, medical specialists, osteopaths)
- Physician Assistants
- Nurses (nurse practitioners, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, nursing assistants)
- Pharmacists
- Dentists
- Dental Assistants
- Optometrists
- Veterinarians
- Emergency medical technicians
- Public health workers
- Epidemiologists
- Infectious disease specialists
- Toxicologists
- Mental health practitioners (psychologists, substance abuse counselors, social workers)
- Health educators/communicators
- Other medical and public health professionals

What do individuals with a non-medical or healthcare background do as an MRC volunteer?

Individuals with a non-medical or healthcare background typically serve their community by assisting with administrative and other essential support functions. Possible types of administrative and other support volunteers include:

- Administrators and business managers
- Administrative assistants and office support staff
- Drivers
- Chaplains
- Training directors
- Trainers
- Volunteer coordinators
- Fundraising professionals
- Supply and logistics managers
- Interpreters/translators
- Amateur radio operators
- Other support personnel

Do MRC volunteers only help in disaster time (during emergency situations)?

Although the MRC volunteers are ready to respond to disasters or emergencies, part of the MRC program's mission is to foster disaster preparedness. MRC volunteers also are called to help during non-emergency times.

How do MRC volunteers help in non-emergency times (situations)?

During non-emergent times, MRC volunteers strengthen the overall health of Americans by participating in general public health initiatives such as flu vaccination clinics and diabetes detection programs. MRC volunteers also promote improving health literacy, increasing disease prevention, eliminating health disparities, and supporting public health preparedness.

Once I become an MRC volunteer, what happens if I am not available all the time?

Volunteer availability is discussed during the MRC volunteer application process. MRC volunteers do not have to be available all the time. Some volunteers may only be interested in making a minimal commitment during times of crisis or for other specific community needs. These preferences are respected, given that they can be accommodated by the MRC unit's mission and work plan.

MRC Unit Coordinators match community needs for emergency medical response and public health initiatives with volunteer capabilities. They also determine prospective volunteers' availability and whether they have other obligations, such as regular work responsibilities, that might conflict with serving the MRC in times of limited advanced notice. Different people will have different amounts of time to give. Some may not be available year-round, and others may need to be utilized throughout the year to remain engaged with the MRC.

I am interested in becoming an MRC volunteer. What do I do first?

The first step in becoming an MRC volunteer is to locate the MRC unit closest to the volunteer. Access the list of [registered MRC units](#) to find contact information.

[back to top](#)

9/15/2015 12:17:16 PM

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response | U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

[Contact Us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [Viewers & Players](#) | [Disclaimer](#) | [Site Map](#)

