

VIPR Update

Mississippi State Department of Health

Volunteers Needed for Fall H1N1 Mass Vaccination Campaigns

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The Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) is looking for volunteers to join its Volunteers in Preparedness Registry (VIPR) to help with upcoming H1N1 mass vaccination related activities throughout the state. Service organizations, church groups, families and individuals are all encouraged to participate as MSDH gears up for this Public Health challenge. Both medical and non-medical volunteers will be needed to help give shots, answer phones, transport supplies, interpret, help with paperwork, registration, etc.

When a large-scale emergency occurs, such as a natural disaster, an influenza epidemic, or even a terrorist attack those who make the biggest difference are those prepared in advance and ready to respond immediately. That's why the Emergency System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals (ESAR-VHP) also known as VIPR was established. Through VIPR, both medical and non-medical volunteers are trained, exercised, and stand ready to take action and assist professional first responders as part of a structured effective system.

By enrolling in advance, your credentials are already verified and you'll know exactly what to do when you are notified of an emergency. This means you'll avoid wondering at the last minute, "How can I help?" and you avoid the frustration of arriving at an emergency site only to be turned away as other well meaning but spontaneous volunteers might be. A community's local response to a disaster is dependent on those willing to give of themselves for the good of others. By participating in VIPR you'll be part of an exclusive group of medical volunteers. You will be recognized for performing a vital service to the community. You'll have the peace of mind knowing you are giving your best back at a time and in a way that the community needs you most.

If you'd like to help, we've provided a link on the MSDH website at www.healthmys.com (click on Emergency Preparedness), or go directly to the VIPR website at <http://volunteer.msdh.state.ms.us>. More specific details regarding the Novel H1N1 influenza volunteer response will follow in a special edition of the VIPR Update and on the MSDH website.

Amateur Radio Emergency Communications

In times of crisis and natural disasters, amateur radio is often used as a means of emergency communication when wire line, cell phones and other conventional means of communications fail.

Unlike commercial systems, Amateur radio is not as dependent on terrestrial facilities that can fail. It is dispersed throughout a community without "choke points" such as cellular telephone sites that can be overloaded. Amateur radio operators are experienced in improvising antennas and power sources and most equipment today can be powered by an automobile battery. Annual "Field Days" are held in many countries to practice these emergency improvisational skills. Amateur radio operators can use hundreds of frequencies and can quickly establish networks tying disparate agencies together to enhance interoperability. Recent examples include the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in Manhattan, the 2003 North America blackout and Hurricane Katrina in September 2005, where amateur radio was used to coordinate disaster relief activities when other systems failed. On September 2, 2004, ham radio was used to inform weather forecasters with information on Hurricane Frances live from the Bahamas. On December 26, 2004, an earthquake and resulting tsunami across the Indian Ocean



Solar-powered Amateur Radio Station in tents.

wiped out all communications with the Andaman Islands, except for a small group of amateur radio operators who provided a means to coordinate relief efforts. Recently, Amateur Radio operators in the People's Republic of China provided emergency communications after the 2008 Sichuan earthquake and U.S. hams did similar work following Hurricane Ike.

The largest disaster response by U.S. amateur radio operators was during Hurricane Katrina which first made landfall as a Category 1 hurricane went through Miami, Florida on August 25, 2005, eventually strengthening to Category 5. More than a thousand ham operators from all over the U.S. converged on the Gulf Coast in an effort to provide emergency communications assistance. Subsequent Congressional hearings highlighted the Amateur Radio response as one of the few examples of what went right in the disaster relief effort.

In the United States, there are two major methods of organizing amateur radio emergency communications: the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES), an organization of amateur operators sponsored by the ARRL; and the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES), a radio service regulated by the FCC. RACES requires registration with a local civil defense organization, to allow continued operation under Part 97.407^[2] of the FCC regulations in the event the Amateur Service is ever shut down by presidential order. ARES and RACES involvement within the same area are usually intertwined, with many governments requiring membership and service in that locale's ARES organization as well. Many government Emergency Operations Centers, Red Cross Chapters and National Weather Service facilities have permanent Amateur Radio stations installed. Radio clubs independent of the ARRL and ARES also participate in emergency communications activities in some areas, and some non-radio organizations have their own amateur arm. The Department of Defense sponsors the Military Affiliate Radio System (MARS) program which utilizes Amateur Radio operators for emergency communication using military radio frequencies. The National Weather Service SKYWARN weather-spotter program has a strong amateur radio contingent. And amateurs dedicated to the Salvation Army are organized under their SATERN program.

Emergency communications and disaster assistance is usually done in conjunction with volunteer disaster relief organizations such as the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, local government emergency management agencies, as well as volunteer fire departments and ambulance corps. The ARRL has memoranda of understanding with numerous agencies expected to receive services, including the American Red Cross and Salvation Army and is a partner in the Citizen Corps program of FEMA. The ARRL also is a member of the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) and conducts emergency communications certification courses for interested Amateur Radio operators.

Source: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Mississippi Prepares for Hurricane Season with AmbuBus

With the 2009 hurricane season underway, Mississippi has gotten on the bus and joined other states in FEMA Region IV by deploying the AmbuBus from First Line Technology in a statewide effort to enhance special needs evacuation capabilities. The kits enhance statewide evacuation plans by quickly creating a mass transport fleet. By using existing assets like school buses and other vehicles of opportunity, states are able to operate a mass transport capability without the expensive costs of maintaining an ambulance fleet.

Through grant funds, The Mississippi Department of Health has purchased 14 kits. Each kit will accommodate 12-18 patients. The kits offer an economical solution to an important factor in disaster response. Converting buses into medical transportation offers emergency responders an added resource to effectively and efficiently evacuate the special needs population in as short amount of time as possible.



AmbuBus Kit Installed

The Mississippi Department of Health has partnered with local school districts to deploy the AmbuBus capabilities around the state. Currently the kits are located in the school districts of Jackson, Grenada, Hattiesburg, Lauderdale, Pearl and Rankin. A joint training session was conducted on June 19th, 2009 between the school districts and the Department of Health for the preparation of summertime severe weather. When needed, the AmbuBus can quickly convert school and transit buses into mass transport vehicles for the special needs population to safely and efficiently evacuate hospitals, medical facilities, and nursing homes.

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***The Volunteers in Preparedness Registry (VIPR) is a preparedness program sponsored by the Mississippi state Department of Health, Office of Emergency Planning and Response (OEPR). It is a secure database of pre-credentialed volunteers who are trained to provide a coordinated response to emergencies in support of our established public health and emergency response systems. The VIPR Update is a product of the public health emergency volunteer program. Visit the VIPR website at <http://volunteer.msdh.state.ms.us> to register and create your own secured personal profile.*

Training Opportunities

<u>Date</u>	<u>Venue</u>	<u>Target Audience</u>
October 9, 2009 Mound Bayou, MS	VIPR Volunteer Level II Training Delta Health Center (Special Request)	Health Center Employees
February 25-26, 2010 Jackson, MS	National Disaster Management System Exercise Exercise/Drill	Volunteers needed as actors and support
March 8-10, 2010 Gulfport, MS	Mass Fatality Conference	Coroners, EMA Directors, medical hospital personnel, Funeral Home Directors, Mental Health, EMS, EMT
TBD Philadelphia, MS	VIPR Volunteer Training Levels I – III (Special Request)	General (Choctaw Nation)
TBD/On-going/Special Request	VIPR Volunteer Training Levels I – III Statewide	VIPR volunteers, general public
