



# 2017 Hurricane Irma: Medical Reserve Corps Unit Activities



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# 2017 Hurricane Irma — Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) Unit Activities

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## Overview

Hurricane Irma started as a Tropical Storm on August 30, 2017, progressing into a category 5 hurricane on September 5, with maximum sustained winds of 185 mph over the Atlantic Ocean. The storm traveled west, passing through the Virgin Islands and just north of the islands of Puerto Rico. Hurricane Irma reached the east coast of Florida on September 10, with category 4 hurricane intensity. In addition to the long periods of heavy rain and strong winds, Hurricane Irma brought storm surge flooding in areas away from the storm center. As the hurricane reached northwest Florida the morning of September 11, wind gusts across south Georgia and northwest Florida lowered to the 45 to 60 mph range and weakened to a tropical depression as it moved north across central Georgia.<sup>1</sup>

Federal, territory, state, and local government and non-governmental partners worked together to prepare for, respond to, and recover from Hurricane Irma's significant impact. As of March 31, 2018, 58 Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) units have reported 110 preparedness, response, and recovery activities related to Hurricane Irma. These units reported performing sheltering functions, supporting reception/evacuation centers, assisting with emergency communications, and other services. A total of 880 volunteers from these units provided a sum of 9,993 service hours for an estimated economic value of \$370,970. In addition, units within and outside of the impacted regions reported having more volunteers ready and willing to assist, if needed.

To gather data for this summary report, MRC Program staff compiled and reviewed all self-reported MRC unit activities for the period of August 24, 2017 – March 31, 2018. It is important to note that at the time of writing this report, units are still engaged in recovery activities and those activities may not yet be captured.

It is the intent of this report to give an overview of the MRC network's actions during the peak activity of this event. Due to the local nature of the MRC, a true accounting of all of the events and activities is not possible at the Federal level.

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<sup>1</sup> Information for this summary narrative was extracted from data provided publicly on the [National Weather Service's National Hurricane Center Website](#).

## Summary of Reported Hurricane Irma Activities<sup>2</sup>

Hurricane	# of MRC Units	# of MRC Volunteers <sup>3</sup>	# of MRC Activities	# of Volunteer Service Hours	Estimated Total Economic Value
Irma	58	880	110	9,993	\$370,970

### MRC Unit Activities

#### Region 1

##### *Connecticut*

**Fairfield Easton MRC** (Fairfield, CT). The unit received a request for MRC volunteers to support the regional Hurricane Irma evacuee resource center, but were not mobilized when it was determined the center was already staffed with a sufficient number of volunteers.

##### *Massachusetts*

**Bristol-Norfolk MRC** (North Attleboro, MA). The unit received an Emergency Medical Assistance Compact (EMAC) request for volunteers to support Hurricane Irma, as needed. However, volunteers were not activated.

**Central Hampden County MRC** (Chicopee, MA). The unit's fall volunteer meeting included a presentation by two volunteers who shared experiences from their deployment to Florida to support hurricane response.

**Greater New Bedford MRC** (Dartmouth, MA). The unit was placed on stand-by to potentially assist with Hurricane Irma response activities.

**Greater Taunton MRC** (Taunton, MA). The unit was placed on stand-by to potentially assist with medical support for Hurricane Irma.

**Hampden/Wilbraham MRC** (Wilbraham, MA). The unit hosted a Hampden County MRC volunteer meeting that included a presentation by two volunteers who shared experiences from their deployment to Florida to support hurricane response.

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<sup>2</sup> A number of MRC units throughout the network reported general hurricane-related activities such as maintaining hurricane situational awareness with volunteers; participating in partner meetings that discussed hurricane response; and conducting emergency preparedness outreach. These activities are not included in this summary table; however, a list of MRC units reporting such activities is included in Appendix A.

<sup>3</sup> The tally for volunteers listed in this table and on subsequent pages of this report may not necessarily reflect a unique individual volunteer count. For example, an MRC volunteer who participated in multiple response activities with his/her unit would be counted separately in each activity. Other data (e.g., number of units, number of volunteer service hours) are unduplicated counts.

**Upper Merrimack Valley MRC** (Westford, MA). The unit was placed on stand-by after the state of Massachusetts received a request from the state of Florida for a medical response team to support a special needs shelter.

## Region 2

### *New Jersey*

**Atlantic County Public Health MRC** (Northfield, NJ). The state of New Jersey received EMAC requests for nurses and other volunteers to assist with general shelter operations. The request was communicated to MRC units through the New Jersey Department of Health. Three (3) Atlantic County Public Health MRC volunteers were activated, but were released after the request was rescinded on September 19.

**Essex County Public Health Reserve Corps** (Livingston, NJ). The unit leader received and disseminated time-sensitive EMAC requests for MRC volunteers to assist in Georgia and Florida as a result of Hurricane Irma. Based on responses received from volunteers, the leader added those interested to a deployment list in the New Jersey MRC Registry.

**Morris County MRC** (Morristown, NJ). The New Jersey Department of Health received an EMAC request from the states of Georgia and Florida for assistance with general/medical needs shelters. The unit had 17 volunteers on stand-by for deployment until the EMAC request was rescinded.

**Sussex County MRC** (Hamburg, NJ). MRC volunteers were placed on stand-by for potential deployment to Florida or Georgia in response to an EMAC request received by the state of New Jersey. However, the request was rescinded prior to deployment.

**Middlesex County Medical Reserve Corps** (East Brunswick, NJ). The unit prepared volunteers and medical needs shelter trailers for a potential EMAC deployment to Florida in response to the hurricane. In addition, volunteers transported pallets of relief supplies to the New Jersey National Guard for transport to Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands.

### *Puerto Rico*

**MRC of Puerto Rico** (San Juan, PR). Seventy (70) medical and non-medical volunteers served 458 hours supporting dialysis patients evacuated from the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as assisted with the verification of medical supplies packaging.

## Region 3

### *Pennsylvania*

**Philadelphia MRC** (Philadelphia, PA). From October 12 to December 22, 2017, 30 volunteers served 318 hours supporting a disaster assistance services center. The center was activated by the City of Philadelphia to provide information on available services (e.g., health and medical, housing, education, state benefit programs) for individuals displaced from Puerto Rico and other locations due to the hurricanes.

## Region 4

### *Alabama*

**Autauga/Prattville MRC** (Prattville, AL). The unit provided phone bank and call center support to the Autauga County Emergency Management Agency (EMA). Two (2) volunteers served 64 hours answering phones and provided information to Hurricane Irma evacuees regarding open shelters, hotel rooms, campgrounds, and livestock shelters.

**Baldwin County MRC** (Robertsdale, AL). Four (4) volunteer physicians were deployed to provide medical support at a shelter for evacuees for three days.

**Dallas Co. Medical Reserve Unit** (Selma, AL). Unit leadership participated in meetings and briefings with the local EMA regarding the potential impact of Hurricane Irma and possible community needs, which were then communicated with MRC volunteers. The unit was also prepared to distribute emergency prescriptions to evacuees, if needed.

**Mobile MRC** (Mobile, AL). The unit coordinator communicated with officials from the local EMA, Emergency Preparedness team, American Red Cross chapter, and with the Baldwin County MRC leader to discuss if MRC volunteers would be needed to support a shelter for Hurricane Irma evacuees. Volunteers were not utilized, but the Mobile MRC coordinator supported a mass care shelter for evacuees.

**North Alabama MRC** (Huntsville, AL). The unit prepared to potentially support the community if there was a need. The unit leader reviewed the volunteer roster to identify volunteers that could support a pop-up shelter as well as maintained communications with volunteers.

### *Florida*

**Alachua Area MRC** (Gainesville, FL). Alachua County Health Department opened and operated two special medical needs shelters for local residents and statewide evacuees. Thirteen (13) MRC volunteers helped staff the shelters for eight days.

**Broward County MRC** (Fort Lauderdale, FL). Two (2) volunteer physicians and one EMT served 120 hours in support of special needs shelters in Broward County from September 9–11, 2017.

**Central Florida MRC** (Orlando, FL). Three (3) volunteers assisted the Brevard County Office of Emergency Management in preparation for the hurricane by entering data for special needs shelter applications. Five (5) volunteers responded to a request from the Florida Department of Health in Orange County and provided medical support at three different shelters. In addition, four MRC volunteers served 368 hours supporting operations at the disaster response center set up for evacuees from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Volunteers provided first aid assistance and information on available resources from October 18 to December 20, 2017.

**Collier County MRC** (Naples, FL). A hospice chaplain MRC volunteer served eight hours at a special needs shelter providing spiritual and behavioral health support to shelter staff and occupants.

**Duval County MRC** (Jacksonville, FL). The unit was activated to support water distribution to community members.

**Flagler County MRC** (Palm Coast, FL). Volunteers supported evacuation efforts as well as a special needs shelter assisting with set-up, transportation, and food preparation. The unit also supported the Emergency Operations Center volunteer reception desk and call center. In addition, volunteers assisted with county-wide recovery efforts by cleaning up beach debris, tarping, and conducting muck out. Volunteers also participated in meetings to discuss hurricane response and long-term recovery procedures and efforts. A total of 23 volunteers served 212 hours during the response.

**Florida Keys MRC** (Marathon, FL). Six (6) volunteers assessed Monroe County special needs patients who were evacuated to a staging area at a local high school in Upper Keys. Patients were assessed for their wellness, stability, and medical needs before being transported to a special needs shelter in Miami. After the hurricane, the unit coordinator and administrator attended the Keys Health Ready Coalition meeting with all public health preparedness organizations in the county, which included a debriefing of the hurricane response and resulted in the identification of future training and equipment needs.

**Hillsborough County MRC** (Tampa, FL). MRC volunteers supported the Hillsborough County special needs shelters and provided wellness checks to facilities without power. A total of 35 volunteers served 816 hours.

**Manatee County MRC** (Bradenton, FL). Six (6) volunteers served 288 hours staffing a special needs shelter helping with logistics and patient care.

**Marion County MRC** (Ocala, FL). The unit had four volunteers serve 32 hours supporting the Marion County Department of Health with two special needs shelters that served more than 400 clients.

**Martin County MRC** (Stuart, FL). Twenty-five (25) volunteers served 1,178 hours supporting a special needs shelter by helping with set-up, logistics, and medical and non-medical staffing.

**MRC of Sarasota County** (Sarasota, FL). Four (4) volunteers served 32 hours providing medical stand-by support at both a general population and special needs shelter.

**North Florida MRC** (Tallahassee, FL). The unit had two (2) volunteers respond during Hurricane Irma serving 18 hours. One volunteer assisted at the Leon County Emergency Operations Center and the other volunteer at the Leon County special needs shelter.

**Okeechobee MRC** (Okeechobee, FL). Twenty-six (26) volunteers served 284 hours in support of the response to Hurricane Irma, including the following:

- Six (6) volunteers served 30 hours in preparation for the hurricane by preparing a response trailer, shelter supplies, and generators.
- Eleven (11) volunteers served 90 hours supporting FEMA distribution of meals ready-to-eat (MREs), water, ice, and tarps.

**Okaloosa - Walton MRC** (Fort Walton Beach, FL). As part of the unit's *Lean on Me Project*, volunteers performed visits to community members' homes and assisted with preparation for the hurricane. Volunteers also made phone calls during the hurricane to community members for wellness check-ins. One (1) MRC volunteer nurse deployed for six days with staff from county health departments to support a special needs shelter in Clay County. The volunteer provided medical support at the shelter and assisted with preparing an evacuation staging area in response to flooding near the shelter.

- A volunteer manned the ESF#8 desk for a 12-hour overnight shift, which allowed for Department of Health employees to be in the field for post-hurricane activities.
- Local emergency management requested the unit support the Emergency Operations Center call center. Two (2) volunteers provided support before, during, and after the hurricane for a total of 96 hours.
- Four (4) volunteers served 40 hours conducting house-to-house damage assessments as an MRC/Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) team.
- Two (2) MRC volunteers helped with post-hurricane inventory and clean-up serving 16 hours.

**Palm Beach County MRC** (West Palm Beach, FL). Ten (10) volunteers with various clinical backgrounds served 318 hours supporting special needs shelters with set-up, logistical operations, patient care, and demobilization.

**Pinellas County MRC** (St. Petersburg, FL). Fourteen (14) of the unit's medical volunteers were deployed to support staff of the Pinellas County Department of Health and provide care to occupants of three special needs shelters. Most volunteers served 72 hours working 12-hour shifts. In addition, a volunteer who is a mental health physician provided two trainings for the MRC and Department of Health staff supporting these shelters that focused on developing coping strategies when exposed to trauma during a response. As part of the training, participants received a packet with a self-assessment and compassion fatigue worksheet. Overall, volunteers served 772 hours.

**Polk/Hardee County MRC** (Bartow, FL). Two (2) volunteers, a registered nurse and an EMS volunteer, served 65 hours supporting shelters.

**St. Lucie County MRC** (Port St. Lucie, FL). Two (2) volunteers served 68 hours supporting a special needs shelter and general population shelter over five days.

**Sumter County Florida MRC** (The Villages, FL). MRC volunteers called clients on the special needs registry to inform them of the potential opening of a special needs shelter and made follow-up calls once it opened. Volunteers also helped staff the Wildwood special needs shelter for eight days serving more than 100 patients. After the hurricane, volunteers met to conduct a hot wash of their participation in the response that will be included as part of the Florida Department of Health-Sumter County After Action Report for Irma. Overall, 44 volunteers served a total of 332 hours.

**Volusia County MRC** (Daytona Beach, FL). MRC volunteers assisted with preparation and set-up of a special needs shelter, as well as provided nursing, clerical, and animal control support during shelter operations. After the response, volunteers presented about their deployment during the unit's MRC meeting.

**West Central Florida MRC** (New Port Richey, FL). Six (6) MRC volunteers were activated to support special needs and general shelters in Hernando and Pasco counties that served approximately 675 clients. In total, volunteers served 160 hours.

## Georgia

**East Central Health District MRC** (Augusta, GA). The unit had nurses, physicians, other medical professionals, and non-medical volunteers support shelter operations for more than 4,000 hurricane evacuees. A total of 149 volunteers served 1,186 hours.

**MRC of West Georgia** (LaGrange, GA). The Georgia Department of Public Health Emergency Operations Center requested licensed medical and non-medical personnel to support sheltering operations in Augusta, GA. The MRC deployed five volunteers to provide shelter support for access and functional needs patients serving 108 hours.

**MRC Georgia East Metro (GEM)** (Dacula, GA). Eleven (11) volunteers deployed to support shelters in Augusta and Columbus, GA, for seven days, serving 371 hours. In addition, volunteers participated in a review of the hurricane response with local health department staff discussing their roles, experiences, and suggested improvements.



**Figure 1: MRC GEM (GA) volunteers support shelter operations and patient care at the Columbus Civic Center**

**University of Georgia MRC** (Athens, GA). Eleven (11) MRC volunteers were requested by the local Emergency Management Agency to support the county's Hurricane Irma Damage Assessment Call Center and Hurricane Irma Call Center along with the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). MRC volunteers served a total of 108 hours. The unit also participated in state conference calls that updated volunteers during the response.

**West Central Health District MRC** (Columbus, GA). Ten (10) volunteers served 80 hours manning two storm shelters for residents living in mobile homes in Lumpkin, GA, and Richland, GA.

## Mississippi

**Central Mississippi MRC** (Jackson, MS). The unit assisted the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Jackson, MS, by setting up a National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) Patient Reception Center at the Air National Guard Base in Flowood, MS. Five (5) MRC volunteers served 56 hours.

**Mississippi Behavioral Health MRC** (Jackson, MS). The unit was placed on stand-by to provide crisis counseling support, if requested by the state EMA.

## ***North Carolina***

**Capital MRC** (Raleigh, NC). The unit was placed on stand-by to assist with Hurricane Irma, specifically related to the repatriation efforts of evacuees from the Caribbean islands.

**Mountain Regional MRC** (Flat Rock, NC). The unit was on stand-by and prepared Medical Response Packages to support a potential response.

**North Carolina Baptist Men MRC Central Region** (Cary, NC). From September 14 through November 24, 2017, five volunteers served 528 hours in support of disaster relief and recovery efforts in Miami and Big Pine Key, FL.

## ***South Carolina***

**Lowcountry Public Health Reserve Corps** (North Charleston, SC). The unit leader sent multiple emails to all volunteers to keep them informed of any volunteer opportunities and to gauge their interest, if needed. The American Red Cross sent a request for volunteers to help with general population shelters, and an MRC volunteer worked with the Red Cross to conduct a wellness check.

**Pee Dee Public Health Reserve Corps** (Sumter, SC). One (1) volunteer assisted with providing situational awareness information to the Regional Coordination Center. Two (2) nurse volunteers were placed on stand-by to assist with special medical needs shelter operations, but were not needed.

**South Carolina Veterinary Reserve Corps** (Columbia, SC). The unit's lead veterinarian volunteer supported a temporary emergency pet shelter that also served as a distribution hub providing assistance to impacted animals from Georgia and Florida. The volunteer assisted with examining animals and performing preventive care necessary for evacuation. The unit leader also served as the head liaison for ESF 17: Animal/Agriculture Emergency Response during the hurricane response, which involved working with partners in other state agencies.

**Upstate Public Health Reserve Corps** (Greenville, SC). The unit's registered nurses, license practical nurses, and advanced practice nurses were requested by the American Red Cross to possibly support a general population shelter. The MRC unit leader contacted the unit's nurses and connected those who responded with availability with the Red Cross for further coordination.

## **Region 6**

### ***Louisiana***

**New Orleans MRC** (New Orleans, LA). Three (3) volunteers served 12 hours to support a Hurricane Irma call center, answering questions and helping to enroll individuals in the Special Needs Registry.

### ***Oklahoma***

**Choctaw Nation MRC** (Caddo, OK). From September 18 - 28, 2017, three MRC volunteers served 42 hours taking calls from Choctaw tribal members impacted by the hurricane.

## **Region 9**

### ***Arizona***

**Yavapai County MRC** (Prescott, AZ). Arizona received a state-to-state mutual aid request from Texas and Florida for hurricane relief assistance. An emergency call-out was sent to all MRC units throughout Arizona. All staff and volunteers were on stand-by for approximately a month; however, no deployments were issued.

## Appendix A

The following MRC units reported general hurricane-related activities, such as maintaining hurricane situational awareness with volunteers; participating in partner meetings that discussed hurricane response; and conducting emergency preparedness outreach.

### Region 1

- Wachusett MRC (Hubbardston, MA)

### Region 2

- Bergen County MRC (Hackensack, NJ)
- Camden County MRC (Blackwood, NJ)

### Region 3

- Chester County MRC (West Chester, PA)
- Greater Prince William MRC (Manassas, VA)
- Lord Fairfax Health District MRC (Winchester, VA)

### Region 4

- Calhoun-Cleburne MRC (Jacksonville, AL)
- Coastal Georgia MRC (Savannah, GA)
- MRC of West Georgia (LaGrange, GA)
- Clayton County MRC (Forest Park, GA)
- Clark County MRC (Winchester, KY)
- Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department (Chattanooga, TN)
- Upper Cumberland Tennessee Regional MRC (Cookeville, TN)

### Region 5

- Indiana State Board of Animal Health MRC (Indianapolis, IN)
- Washtenaw County MRC (Ypsilanti, MI)
- MRC of Freeborn County (Albert Lea, MN)

### Region 6

- Acadiana MRC (Lafayette, LA)

### Region 8

- Pueblo MRC (Pueblo, CO)
- Bear River MRC – Box Elder County (Brigham City, UT)
- Bear River MRC – Cache County (Logan, UT)
- Bear River MRC – Rich County (Logan, UT)