



COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS



Putnam's Medical Reserve Corps Wants You

The Putnam County Medical Reserve Corps, known as the M-R-C for short, wants your help and recruitment is in high gear this September for Emergency Preparedness Month. Nearly 300 active volunteers have joined, but more are needed to fill key roles—and it is not just medical personnel who are required. Each and every volunteer is a prized asset. Each helps to ease strain on a potentially overburdened system, when an emergency or disaster strikes.

Experts predict weather extremes will become more commonplace. Given the past few seasons, it seems likely to be true. Whether it is an unexpected snow storm in October, a flu epidemic, or high winds and power outages, preparation is the key to a well-timed, effective response.

The Putnam County Department of Health and the Bureau of Emergency Services train year-round to fine tune their staff's ability to respond in both natural and manmade emergencies and disasters. When challenges arise however, extra help is always useful.

Putnam's MRC is part of a national, community based movement launched in response to the events of September 11. Training is provided for all volunteers and the degree of your time commitment is entirely up to you. Responsibilities vary depending on a person's background and the needs of the incident. Those with medical qualifications might be asked to administer medication, or conduct medical interviews or examinations, but others contribute in key areas, assisting with patient registration, serving as interpreters, providing data entry, and more.

While these volunteers support and supplement existing infrastructure in times of large-scale public health emergencies, they may also be called upon to function in non-emergency public health situations, such as immunization or chronic disease prevention efforts. In fact, 50 percent of the workers at last fall's flu clinic at Brewster High School were MRC volunteers practicing a "POD drill," for "point of dispensing" exercise, that would occur should mass inoculation become necessary.

On September 20, the PCDOH is hosting a free screening of the movie Contagion as part Emergency Preparedness Month. The Putnam County MRC coordinator, along with an expert panel of emergency services and health department officials, will be available to answer questions and enroll MRC volunteers. If you are interested in playing an important role strengthening the health and safety of our community, consider volunteering for the MRC. For more information, please contact our MRC Coordinator, Keiren Farquhar, by telephone at 845-808-1390, or by email at keiren.farquhar@putnamcountyny.gov

*Allen Beals, MD
Commissioner of Health
Putnam County
Department of Health*