

## Eastern Idaho Public Health District

# EASTERN IDAHO MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS NEWSLETTER



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*The mission of the MRC is to improve the health and safety of communities across the country by organizing and utilizing public health, medical and other volunteers.*

**Eastern Idaho Public Health District**

1250 Hollipark Drive  
Idaho Falls ID 83201

Phone: 208-533-3145  
Fax: 208-525-7063  
E-mail:  
hpeterson@phd7.idaho.gov

**We're on the Web at**  
**[www.idaho.gov/phd7](http://www.idaho.gov/phd7)**

## A PANDEMIC IS DECLARED WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?

The health district has been telling people for several years that we are overdue for an Influenza Pandemic and to be prepared. Now since early spring we have watched as the pandemic unfolded before our very eyes. On June 11, 2009 the World Health Organization declared the H1N1 outbreak had reached phase 6, which is a pandemic.

The difficulty in presenting this message has always been that people often don't take preparation seriously until the emergency is upon them. Another thing that is hard to explain is that while we have known that we would have another influenza pandemic we were not able to predict when it would happen or how severe it would be.

The novel H1N1 influenza virus that is the cause of the pandemic appears at this time to cause relatively mild disease in most people. This has caused many to discount the seriousness of the pandemic. Please remember that people are dying with this virus. Experts are watching very carefully to see if the virus changes or becomes more lethal when the second wave begins to come through the country.

### What can you do to protect yourself and your Family

All indications are that there will be an H1N1 flu vaccine available some time near the beginning of November. This vaccine is going through clinical trials right now and CDC has assured us that they will not allow the vaccine to be used unless it is safe. This vaccine will be distributed to specific target groups as soon as possible. It is likely that there will be plenty of vaccine available although if you are not in one of the target groups you may need to wait for a later shipment. Getting the vaccine when it is available is the best protection.

Other than the vaccine there are a few things you should remember to protect yourself from getting the flu:

1. Wash your hands frequently especially before you touch your mouth or nose
2. Cover your coughs or sneezes with a tissue or do it in your sleeve
3. Stay home if you are sick and keep your children home if they are sick
4. Get your seasonal flu shot



## MRC VOLUNTEERS RESPONDED TO THE VOLUNTEER IDAHO PROGRAM

In the last MRC newsletter we gave instructions for all MRC volunteers to log on and register in the Volunteer Idaho Program. Volunteer Idaho is the computer program used to organize volunteers and to verify credentials for our MRC before we need to mobilize them. We appreciate those of you who took the time to register on the system. Even if you do not have credentials for some kind of healthcare profession we need you to be registered on the system.

On July 28th and 29th the Idaho State Department of Health and Welfare conducted an exercise to test the system. A scenario was presented for the purpose of the exercise. The scenario said that the H1N1 virus had become very virulent and many people were dying. It was determined that there was a need to open Mass Vaccination sites and we needed volunteers from our MRC to help staff those sites.

We tried to send all of our volunteers registered on Volunteer Idaho at the time an e-mail requesting them to respond as they would for a real life incident. We appreciate those of you that responded especially those that responded positively.

We learned a little more about how the system works and found that we had not sent e-mails to all of the registered volunteers due to a little idiosyncrasy with the way the program works. It is always a good thing to conduct these exercises so that we learn these things before we really need to use the system. If you did not get a mobilization request we are sorry you were left out but next time we will know how to use the system better. That is the great thing about exercises.

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## SEPTEMBER IS PREPAREDNESS MONTH MRC OPEN HOUSE PLANNED

September is National Preparedness Month. Communities all over the country are planning events to teach and help their citizens get prepared. To get some ideas and learn what you should do to be prepared for all kinds of emergencies and disasters we recommend the [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) website.

The Eastern Idaho Medical Reserve Corps needs more volunteers to help us be prepared. We are anticipating the need to use MRC volunteers to set up Points of Dispensing (POD) for the H1N1 flu vaccine.

In the near future you will probably see or hear public service announcements asking for people to volunteer for the MRC. On September 12th, a Saturday, we are planning a volunteer open house at Eastern Idaho Public Health District Office in Idaho Falls. This open house will give us an opportunity to give a brief orientation to prospective volunteers, to help them register on "Volunteer Idaho" and to show them what they may be asked to do as a volunteer at a POD.

We would like some of you, our already faithful volunteers, to come and help us. We need people to help us set up the POD using the signs and equipment we have in our emergency trailer and to assist in showing the new recruits how the POD works and explaining things you have done as an MRC volunteer. We will provide "Just In Time" training for you. If you are interested in helping us that day please contact Holly at 533-3145 or Marilyn at 533-3154



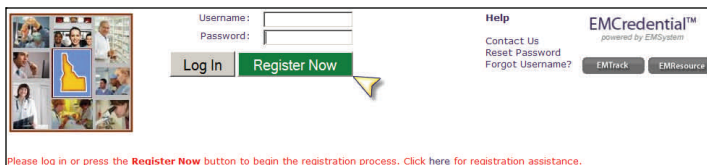
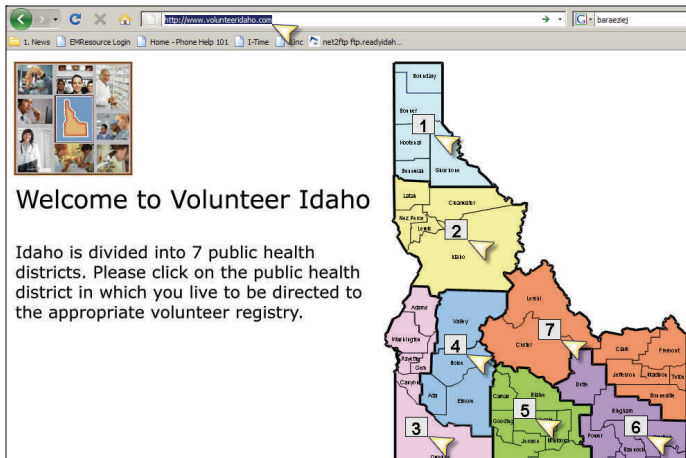
Does this Information look familiar? That is because it is. This is the same information you received in the last newsletter. The reason for repeating it is because it is important and we really need you to register in the Volunteer Idaho System. It is the system we are required to use to credential and mobilize our volunteers.

Registering in the system in no way obligates you to respond to any incident. Any time we request volunteers you will be given the opportunity to accept or refuse the assignment.

If you do not have a professional license you are still very important to us and the system will help us keep your information and deployment status readily available.

In order to facilitate the implementation of the new system, we would like you to go to the website to register.

Here are step by step instructions again:



**Volunteer Registration**

If you have previously registered, but did not receive an email click [here to resend](#).

\* First Name:

Middle Name:

\* Last Name:

\* Email Address:

\* Confirm Email Address:

\* Username:   
*username must have at least 6 characters*

\* Password:   
*password must have at least 6 characters*

\* Confirm Password:

\* Password Challenge:

\* Challenge Response:

1. Type this address into your web browser  
<http://www.volunteeridaho.com>
2. When you get to the main page click on the area of the map where you live to be directed to the appropriate volunteer registry.
3. If you have not previously registered at Volunteer Idaho click on the Register Now button.
4. Fill out your basic information. Fields with an asterisk\* are required.
5. Click submit
6. Please note that if you previously registered but did not receive an account activation e-mail just click on the "click here to resend" link near the top of the page.
7. If you do not receive a welcome e-mail check to see if it is in your SPAM or JUNK folder.
8. **Please note:** You are not officially registered in the Volunteer Idaho system until you get the welcome e-mail and respond to it.
9. The e-mail will thank you for registering and give you instructions on how to activate your account and complete the registration process. This process is necessary for your security.
10. You will be asked to click on a link that will take you back to the Volunteer Idaho site where you will need to log in using the user name and password you created earlier.
11. Please read the "Before you register" information then click submit.
12. There are 4 sections of information required to complete the registration. Only fields with asterisks\* are required. At the bottom of each page click the next button. This will save your information and take you to the next section.
13. When you get to the Summary section just review your information and click submit.

You will now be notified by e-mail if your services are needed and you will have the opportunity to review the details of the event before you respond with your willingness to participate.

## WHAT IS NIMS?

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) provides a consistent nationwide mechanism for federal, state, tribal and local governments, and private sector and nongovernmental organizations to effectively work together to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergency incidents. Hallmarks of NIMS include a unified approach to incident management; standard command and management structures; and an emphasis on preparedness, mutual aid and resource management. While most agree that NIMS implementation is necessary and beneficial, there is widespread confusion among Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) units on how to be "NIMS compliant."

Federal NIMS compliance guidelines stipulate that recipients of Federal Preparedness grants (normally states, territories, local governments, or tribal governments) must be NIMS compliant. Since most MRC units are sponsored or supported by local, tribal or state governmental organization, and therefore maybe considered components of these organization, it follows that MRC units must also be NIMS compliant. Thus MRC units which are not NIMS compliant may jeopardize the ability of their sponsoring organizations and jurisdictions to receive Federal preparedness grant funding.

What does it mean to be NIMS compliant? It means that personnel should be trained in the basics of Incident Command System (ICS) and the National Incident Management Systems( NIMS). This training helps responders and volunteers understand the organization used universally on local and national levels to respond to an emergency or disaster. The training includes instruction in the common terminology and command structure used in these systems and enables everyone to know how the system works and where they fit in it.

Guidelines from the Federal Emergency Management Agency have specified that volunteers of all levels are NIMS compliant if they have completed

1. ICS 100a –Introduction to Incident Command System
2. NIMS 700a Introduction to the National Incident Management System.

Instructions on how to access these courses was given in the last newsletter but here is a quick reminder. On the internet go to <http://training.fema.gov>, click on FEMA Independent Study, click on NIMS courses, click on the name of the course and then choose Interactive web based course and just follow the instructions.



Eastern Idaho Public Health District  
Eastern Idaho Medical Reserve Corp  
1250 Hollipark Dr  
Idaho Falls ID 83401