



## SOUTHWEST PUBLIC HEALTH DISTRICT

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### During Emergency Preparedness Month, Medical Reserve Corps putting out call for volunteers

This hurricane season's succession of dangerous storms underscores the importance of emergency preparedness and the value of having a trained corps of local volunteers available for rapid response in Southwest Georgia, says Southwest Georgia Public Health District Health Director Dr. Jacqueline Grant.

"This month is National Emergency Preparedness Month, and we are reminding residents that by joining the Southwest Georgia Regional Medical Reserve Corps, they can be part of a skilled and compassionate volunteer organization that can make a difference when disaster strikes," Grant said. "During catastrophic events, rapid, organized mobilization of resources can save lives and property. The Southwest Georgia Regional MRC is the first and only Medical Reserve Corps located south of Macon."

The MRC is a unit of the Citizens Corps of Dougherty and Lee counties, said public health emergency preparedness specialist Travis Donnelly, one of the organizers of the corps. It partners with two Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) in Lee and Dougherty counties and a Lee County Fire Corps, he said.

"You don't have to have a medical degree or healthcare experience to belong," said Donnelly. "The Southwest Georgia Regional MRC is actively seeking members regardless of whether they have medical experience. We have volunteer opportunities for people in all disciplines. The main criteria for participating is that you are interested in volunteering in support of your country and that you want to assist friends and neighbors through community service."

Having an MRC in Southwest Georgia is a boon to the region, Grant said. "As tightening budgets and limited resources are affecting healthcare and emergency response providers here and across the state and nation, volunteers like those with MRCs are increasingly important," she said.

The corps enables communities within the Southwest Health District meet specific health needs and develop strategies to become healthier and safer and provides for more local autonomy. "With expertise available through an organization like the Southwest Georgia Medical Reserve Corps, local communities are not as reliant on state and federal resources," Donnelly explained.

Volunteers may be involved in a variety of health and preparedness activities, such as distributing emergency supplies, assisting local health departments with surge personnel needs, working at shelters, staffing wellness events and providing first aid, he said.

To volunteer or learn more, go to [www.southwestgeorgiapublichealth.org](http://www.southwestgeorgiapublichealth.org), select "Home" on the pull-down menu at the top of the page and click on "Preparedness."

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Baker	Calhoun	Colquitt	Decatur	Dougherty	Early	Grady
Lee	Miller	Mitchell	Seminole	Terrell	Thomas	Worth