

Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection
Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE
FOR
APPROVAL OF ACTIVITIES AND MEMBERS OF
MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS UNITS
Issued July 2010, Revised August 2019

Background:

Under Title 28 of the Connecticut General Statutes, specifically §28-1(5), Medical Reserve Corps (“MRC”) members, under the auspices of the state Department of Public Health (“DPH”), are considered “civil preparedness force” members “while engaging in authorized civil preparedness duty or while assisting or engaging in authorized training, for the purpose of eligibility for immunity from liability as provided in §28-13 and for death, disability and injury benefits as provided in §28-14.” Any member of the MRC who is called upon under Title 28, including per Conn. Gen. Stat. §28-7(h), §28-8, or §28-8a, either by civil preparedness personnel (e.g., Emergency Management Directors, or Directors of Health (DoH)) or state or municipal police personnel to assist in any emergency shall be deemed to be engaging in civil preparedness duty while assisting in such emergency or while engaging in training under the auspices of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), the Divisions Emergency Management and Homeland Security and of State Police within DESPP, or a municipal police department for the purpose of eligibility for benefits provided under Conn. Gen. Stat. §28-14. Members of the MRC who are not paid state or municipal employees may receive Title 28 protections if they are activated with the prior approval of DESPP/DEMHS. Conn. Gen. Stat. §§28-7(f), (h), and Conn. Gen. Stat. §28-8(a).

The purpose of this document is to establish a standard operating procedure for the approval of MRC activations when requested by the local Director of Health through the local Emergency Management Director (EMD) of the jurisdiction where the MRC will be active to the Department of Public Health (DPH) and DESPP/DEMHS in order for its members to qualify for the benefits and protections provided under Title 28. Individual DoHs and EMDs should review their Regional Emergency Support Plans (RESP), Emergency Support Function (ESF) 8 Public Health/Healthcare Coalition procedures to ensure alignment with this protocol.

The responsibility for establishing the qualifications of MRC members resides, under Conn. Gen. Stat. §28-1(5), with the DPH and intrastate regional health partners. In order to be eligible for Title 28 protections and benefits, an MRC member must also satisfy the loyalty oath requirements of Conn. Gen. Stat. §28-12. The establishment of this procedure is in keeping with the standards established in a related opinion from the Office of the Attorney General, issued on July 20, 2006, regarding volunteer members of the state’s Community Emergency Response Teams.

The following are guidelines established for the local emergency management and public health community to follow to ensure that MRC members' training and/or participation in an event or disaster are covered under Title 28.

Procedures for Approval Process:

1. General Procedures for Director of Health (DoH)¹ or EMD to Follow for an Emergency MRC Activation under Conn. Gen. Stat. §28-7(h)

As volunteer civil preparedness force members, MRC members may be activated under Section 28-7(h) when deemed essential in the judgment of a local EMD. A request to activate MRC members for a public health emergency is most likely to originate with the DoH, who will:

- (1) Communicate the request with the appropriate local EMD of the jurisdiction where the MRC will be active, who will initiate the activation approval process through the DEMHS Regional Coordinator, orally or by email, or by cell phone/page if the request is made after regular business hours.
- (2) Within 48 hours of making the emergency request, the DoH will submit a completed *MRC Activation Request Form* and associated roster of MRC members to the local EMD. The DoH should receive confirmation of receipt of paperwork from the local EMD.

The local EMD will:

- (1) Only activate MRC members after oral or email confirmation is received from the Regional DEMHS Coordinator that the emergency request is appropriate and acceptable.
- (2) Notify the DoH of the status of the MRC activation request.
- (3) Confirm receipt of and process the written *MRC Activation Request Form* and associated roster of MRC members, as soon as possible, but not more than **48** hours after the initial request is made.

The *MRC Activation Request Form* and supporting roster that is submitted to the Regional DEMHS Coordinator must contain:

- Signatures of the Director of Health and local EMD,
- The date(s) and start and end time of the emergency activation²;
- Location/site of the activation where MRC members reported for duty;
- Roster of individual MRC members who were activated including their start and end times;

¹ A municipal or district director of health (or acting director of health) appointed in accordance with CGS sections 19a-200 or 19a-242. In DEMHS Region 3, the MRC Unit Leader (Commander/Deputy Commander) for purposes of MRC activations, shall make the request through the director of health in the jurisdiction where such MRC personnel will report for duty.

² For the purposes of Title 28 protection, "activation" means both training in preparation of and response to an emergency. It is not anticipated that Title 28 protection will be sought for routine, regularly-scheduled meetings of the MRC.

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- The justification for public health purposes for the emergency activation request, including details of the public health actions taken.
 - VOST activation requests will not be considered for emergency activation purposes.

(The *MRC Activation Request Form* is provided at the end of this document.)

By submitting the names of the MRC members to the EMD, the DoH and the MRC unit leader are certifying that these members have received appropriate training under the local MRC organization, and have been sworn in under Conn. Gen. Stat. §28-12, or are in training to be sworn in under that section. In the case of a specialized MRC team activation, such as the Radiological Professional Volunteer Program (RPVP) team, the DoH and the MRC Unit Leader are also certifying that the participants have the appropriate additional specialized training.

The local DoH and the MRC Unit Leader will maintain a roster of current MRC members, including their names, contact information, credentials, and training received. MRC members will be sworn in every two years. An appointed municipal or district director of health (under Conn. Gen. Stat. 19a-200 or 19a-242, respectively) is considered a civil preparedness officer for the purpose of Conn. Gen. Stat. Section 28-12, and may administer the loyalty oath. Annually, on or before August 15th of each year, the local Director of Health will provide an updated copy of the roster of MRC volunteers to the local EMD, and DPH. See Conn. Gen. Stat. Section 28-12. The EMD, and DoH will maintain a log of all requests submitted to DEMHS, for review by either the Office of Attorney General and/or by DEMHS.

MRC members who self-dispatch to an emergency scene without the approval of the local EMD and the Director of Health will not receive Title 28 protection through DEMHS.

2. Procedures for Director of Health (DoH)³ and EMD to Follow for a Training or Pre-planned Large Scale Event Activation under Conn. Gen. Stat. §28-7(h)

As volunteer civil preparedness force members, MRC members may be activated under Section 28-7(h) when deemed essential in the judgment of a local EMD. A request to activate MRC members for training or a pre-planned, large scale event/exercise is most likely to originate with the DoH. Either the local EMD or DoH will:

- (1) Communicate with the MRC unit leader to prepare MRC activation request paperwork;
- (2) Submit a signed request, at least two calendar weeks before the proposed activation date, to the appropriate local EMD of the jurisdiction where the MRC will be active, who will start the activation approval process through the DEMHS Regional Coordinator, and then through to the DPH and DESPP/DEMHS leadership. Late activation requests may not be approved.

³ A municipal or district director of health (or acting director of health) appointed in accordance with CGS sections 19a-200 or 19a-242. In DEMHS Region 3, the MRC Unit Leader (Commander/Deputy Commander) for purposes of MRC activations, shall make the request through the director of health in the jurisdiction where such MRC personnel will report for duty.

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- (3) If the request is submitted via fax or email, the Director of Health must also provide the local EMD with the original documentation so that the original copies can be processed through to all involved parties (Regional DEMHS, DPH, and DEMHS/DESPP leadership).

The local EMD will:

- (1) Sign the MRC activation request, if in the judgment of the local EMD, the documentation is complete, acceptable and appropriate.
- (2) Process the MRC activation request through to the Regional DEMHS Coordinator
- (3) Notify the local DoH of the status of the MRC activation request, as it is being processed.

The MRC activation request form submitted to the Regional DEMHS Coordinator must contain:

- Signatures of the Director of Health and local EMD,
- The date and anticipated times of the activation⁴;
- Location/site of the activation where MRC members will be reporting;
- Current MRC roster of individual MRC members who are being activated (final paperwork must provide list of participating MRC members, with start and end time indicated);
- The justification for public health preparedness purposes for the activation or training request, including details of the proposed public health activities to be taken, especially in a training situation.
 - All MRC unit activation requests must include the specific public health purpose for which the team is being activated. In the case of VOST MRC activations, the request must also include the key search terms/words that will be monitored by the unit.

(The *MRC Activation Request Form for MRC Units* is provided at the end of this document.)

By submitting the names of the MRC members to the EMD, the DoH and the MRC unit leader are certifying that these members have received appropriate training under the local MRC organization, and have been sworn in under Conn. Gen. Stat. §28-12, or are in training to be sworn in under that section. In the case of a specialized MRC team activation, such as activation of a Virtual Operations Support Team (VOST) or Radiological Professional Volunteer Program (RPVP), the DoH and the MRC Unit Leader are also certifying that the participants have the appropriate additional specialized training.

The local DoH and the MRC Unit Leader will maintain a roster of current MRC members, including their names, contact information, credentials, and training received. MRC members will be sworn in every two years. An appointed municipal or district DoH (under Conn. Gen. Stat. 19a-200 or 19a-242, respectively) is considered a civil preparedness officer for the purpose of Conn. Gen. Stat. Section 28-12, and may administer the loyalty oath. Annually, on or before August 15th of each year, the local DoH will provide an updated copy of the roster of MRC volunteers to the local EMD, and

⁴ For the purposes of Title 28 protection, “activation” means both training in preparation of and response to an emergency. It is not anticipated that Title 28 protection will be sought for routine, regularly-scheduled meetings of the MRC.

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DPH. See Conn. Gen. Stat. Section 28-12. The EMD and DoH will maintain a log of all requests submitted to DEMHS, for review by either the Office of Attorney General and/or by DEMHS.

MRC members who self-dispatch to an emergency scene without the approval of the local EMD and the Director of Health will not receive Title 28 protection through DEMHS.

3. Responsibilities of DEMHS Regional Coordinator

- The DEMHS Regional Coordinator will review the MRC activation requests that have been signed by both the local EMD and DoH, and make a recommendation for approval or denial, based on the submitted documentation within 1 business day. Incomplete activation requests may be denied and re-routed for correction.
- If the Regional Coordinator does not recommend approval of the request, s/he will provide a brief explanation to the DPH for follow-up, if warranted.
- The DEMHS Regional Coordinator will take the following actions as part of the approval process:
 - Notify the local EMD (as warranted) of the activation request and approval status, and the DEMHS Director's final approval or denial of the activation request (see below);
 - Provide the DPH with the signed copy of the DEMHS Director's final approval or denial of the activation request (see below);
 - Obtain the original written request within 48 hours of approval;
 - Maintain a log of all requests submitted to DEMHS.

4. Responsibilities of DPH

- The DPH will review the MRC activation request received within 1 business day or less.
- The DPH will review the MRC activation request for completeness, accuracy, and appropriateness, and if it is found to be acceptable, will then sign the document, and forward the request to the DEMHS State Emergency Management Director.
- DPH signed MRC activation requests will be scanned and attached to an email that is sent to DEMHS/DESPP leadership staff (with an email copy to the DEMHS Regional Coordinator, DoH, and MRC unit lead designated on the request form).
- The DPH will maintain a log of all requests submitted to DPH; both approved and denied.
- The DPH will sign the original copy of the activation request, when routed through the agency, to ensure that DEMHS/DESPP has completed original file copies.

5. Responsibilities of DEMHS State Emergency Management Director

- The DEMHS State Emergency Management Director, or his designee, will review the recommendations of the DEMHS Regional Coordinator and the DPH and shall approve or deny the request.

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- The office of the DEMHS State Emergency Management Director shall provide notification of the activation/denial to appropriate DEMHS personnel, as well as the DPH Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response;
- The office of the DEMHS State Emergency Management Director will maintain a log of all requests submitted to DEMHS.

Filing a Claim for Workers’ Compensation:

In the event that an MRC member is injured in either a pre-approved training or real emergency event, the following procedures will be followed to file a claim for Workers’ Compensation.

- The DoH or EMD who was responsible for activating the MRC member will immediately make sure that the MRC member is treated for any medical issue and take all reasonable efforts to prevent further injury to the MRC member or other members.
- Once the immediate medical situation is stabilized, but in any case, no later than 72 hours after the incident, the DoH or the local EMD will notify the DESPP/DEMHS Regional Coordinator of the details of the accident/ injury to the member(s) of the MRC. In addition, the DoH or local EMD will contact the third party administrator for the State of Connecticut using the following injury reporting hot line: **1-800-828-2717** and complete all associated paperwork as part of the initial intake process.

When the activation is initiated by other municipal authorities (i.e., local police, fire or EMD), DEMHS will be the primary point of contact between the State of Connecticut and the local municipal authority in assuring that the proper paperwork relating to the accident/injury is completed by the MRC member and MRC unit lead. When the activation is initiated by a DoH, the DPH will be the initial primary point of contact between the State of Connecticut and the DoH in assuring that the proper paperwork relating to the accident/injury is completed by the MRC member and MRC Unit lead. DPH will notify the DEMHS State Emergency Director of the accident.

DEMHS/DESPP and DPH will notify their respective Commissioners of the accident/ injury in a timely manner, but no later than 24 hours of notification from the local jurisdiction.

WILLIAM J. HACKETT
STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR

DATE

REGINA Y. RUSH-KITTLE
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER
DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND HOMELAND SECURITY
DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES AND PUBLIC PROTECTION

DATE

