



# Minnesota Responds Medical Reserve Corp: Volunteer Liability Coverage

## Summary

Volunteers provide valuable service and extend state and local response capabilities during emergencies. This proposal provides greater protection for volunteers by clarifying the provision of liability coverage for Minnesota Responds Medical Reserve Corps volunteers who participate in training or other non-emergency activities that prepare them to respond during emergencies.

## Background

Every state is required to establish Emergency Systems for Advanced Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals (ESAR-VHP). Minnesota implemented the Minnesota Responds Medical Reserve Corps system in 2006. The system allows individuals to register to volunteer to their local health department, or one of the state-coordinated volunteer programs. Legislation was passed in 2008 to provide liability and workers' compensation protection for these volunteers.

## Proposal

Under current Minnesota Statutes 145A.06, volunteers are provided workers' compensation or liability protections like a county or state employee when they are deployed by the Commissioner of Health or a local board of health for emergency response. Volunteers also have workers' compensation coverage during training other non-emergency volunteer activities.

This proposal fills the missing gap of liability coverage for volunteers during training and exercises. The volunteers deployed by the Commissioner of Health would be covered under the state liability coverage and volunteers to local boards of health would be covered through county coverage.

Some of the volunteers covered by this proposal are those who set up or practice in the state's mobile medical unit for exercises, clinical volunteers practicing in alternate care sites, or volunteers used by local agencies for exercises in mass dispensing or other training. Volunteers would also be covered if they provide essential public health activities like volunteering to support seasonal flu clinics or public health education.

## Rationale

Minnesota Responds Medical Reserve Corps volunteers provide value and cost savings to MDH, local health departments, and the communities they serve. For example, local health departments reported more than 13,400 hours of volunteer services assisting with clinic services during the 2009-2010 H1N1 pandemic response. Savings were estimated at more than \$268,000.

This proposal will support continued and expanded use of volunteers, clarify questions about liability protections, make it easier to recruit and retain volunteers, and improve training and exercise participation.

### For More Information:

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