

Washington State Emergency Medical Reserve Corps (SEMRC)

December 1, 2023

Introduction

The Washington State Emergency Medical Reserve Corps (SEMRC) provides public health, medical, and mortuary providers that may not be available in the local community during disasters or emergencies.

Background

The SEMRC is a complementary program under the authority of RCW 70.410 that augments the capabilities of local emergency response efforts, including local volunteer programs such as regional MRCs. It addresses gaps in coverage and leverages a state-wide volunteer pool to establish specialized teams that can be deployed to support impacted communities during times of increased demand.

Program Summary

The SEMRC recruits public health professionals, medical professionals, and mortuary affairs professionals to form teams that can be called upon to augment the skills within an impacted community during disasters or emergencies. The program focuses on fostering strong relationships with volunteers through a remote retention plan and maintaining strong partnerships with local emergency response entities.

Volunteers and Their Involvement in the SEMRC

The SEMRC recruits volunteers from various medical professions, starting with a limited list which will be expanded with time. Volunteers can expect to complete minimum training requirements, participate in readiness check-ins, communication drills, and exercises, and respond to requests for deployment during disasters or emergencies.

The program will strive to make the volunteer experience pleasant and efficient by providing positive engagement opportunities while minimizing duplication of information and unnecessary engagement time. When volunteers are needed, the SEMRC will send information about the need to volunteers. Volunteers, in turn, will mark themselves as available or unavailable for activation.



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Activation and Use of the Washington SEMRC

SEMRC volunteers are organized into “response teams.” A response team is a small cadre of volunteers with a shared profession or function. Volunteers from the same response team may be dispersed throughout the state and can be deployed anywhere within the state. This design ensures that the full strength of volunteers across the state can support impacted communities' local response efforts. When a need is identified during an emergency response that cannot be supported by local resources, the SEMRC can activate one or more response teams in coordination with local response.

Local Health Jurisdiction Roles in the SEMRC

Collaboration between the SEMRC and LHJs (local health jurisdictions) is crucial for its success. LHJs play a vital role in identifying needs during emergency responses that cannot be met by the resources available within the community. When such a need arises, LHJs can request additional support from the SEMRC. This triggers a coordinated effort between the SEMRC and LHJs to ensure that the right response teams are deployed to the affected areas. Shared communication protocols will be developed to facilitate volunteer coordination and support between the SEMRC and LHJs. Additionally, the program encourages volunteers to register with their local medical reserve corps to enhance response coordination.

DOH Staff Roles in the SEMRC

The SEMRC is maintained by the Volunteer Management program within the Office of Resiliency and Health Security at the Washington State Department of Health. The program consists of a Program Manager and two Program Specialists. The program also interfaces with state and agency Incident Command System (ICS) operations during deployments as the primary point of contact for volunteers.

Join the Washington SEMRC

Join Washington's SEMRC program and make a difference in emergency response efforts across the state!

By registering with the SEMRC program, volunteers can contribute their skills and expertise to support impacted communities during times of need. Together, we can enhance the overall resiliency of Washington and ensure that the health needs of our people are met during emergencies.

We will have a dedicated webpage available soon with more information about the SEMRC program and to register as a volunteer.

For volunteer questions or to be notified when registration opens, please email: EMRC.Volunteer@doh.wa.gov

For general questions, please email: SEMRC@doh.wa.gov



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