



Fall 2021

RespondDE Dialog Quarterly Newsletter

New RespondDE Leadership

As you all may have noticed over the past few months, RespondDE (formerly the Delaware Medical Reserve Corps [DMRC]) came under new leadership as of July 1, 2021. Mindy Christine, who previously worked as the VAMS Call Center Coordinator for the EMS & Preparedness Section during the height of the 2020 Coronavirus Pandemic, has taken the reins as the new State RespondDE Coordinator and will bring the program into its next chapter. Additionally, oversight of the RespondDE program will now fall to Muriel Gillespie. Muriel is currently the Delaware Health and Social Services (DHSS) Disaster Coordinator for the Division of Public Health's (DPH) EMS and Preparedness Section and works very closely with other agencies, like the Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the American Red Cross, to name a few. She is also in charge of other DPH programs, such as the Access and Functional Needs (AFN) Team and the Functional Assessment Safety Team (FAST). We also want to thank Elle Hammond for all the hard work and dedication she put into this program and wish her all the best in her future endeavors. Please extend warm welcomes to both of them if you haven't done so yet. They are also very excited to work with all of you as we continue to help the People of Delaware through the rest of this pandemic!

THANK YOU, ELLE!

As noted above, Elle Hammond (former State RespondDE Coordinator) has taken on a new role with the Office of Emergency Medical Services. We want to thank Elle for her continued hard work and dedication to the program for the past year and a half. Her work has been instrumental in sending volunteers to assist with COVID-19 testing and vaccination needs, as well as growing the program.



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Trainings update
- RespondDE's response to the Wilmington Flood
- Updated social media links



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

This edition of the volunteer spotlight does not center around just one individual volunteer. Instead, the spotlight falls on **all the volunteers** who have been volunteering their time at the various COVID testing and vaccine clinics (i.e., Westside, Delaware State, University of Delaware) across the state, and especially to those who have been consistently signing up and volunteering, either for the same clinic or for different clinics. Your hard work and dedication to serving your fellow Delawareans during this difficult time is not going unnoticed by any of us. The staff at all the clinics and testing events are so thankful for your help and have had nothing but great things to say about all of you. Keep up the great work and thank you for representing the State of Delaware in such a great way!

THANK YOU ALL!

Your hard work and dedication to serving your fellow Delawareans during this difficult time is not going unnoticed by any of us!

TRAININGS UPDATE

We are currently working on developing new training materials. The COVID-19 Pandemic has obviously prevented us from hosting trainings due to restrictions on in-person gatherings. Stay tuned to your ServDE messages for more updates as they become available!

We appreciate your patience and understanding.

RespondDE—What's in a Name?

I wanted to take a moment to thank all the wonderful volunteers who have always been a part of our Medical Reserve Corps. We also want to thank our dedicated volunteers who have answered the call to serve during our COVID-19 Response and Recovery. I had the wonderful opportunity to meet and work side-by-side with many of you during our Mass Vaccination Points of Dispensing (PODs) that were held at Dover International Speedway, Delaware Motor Vehicle locations, and many other locations throughout Delaware. There are many RespondDE members that are still helping our partners in many ways both in roles that are medical and non-medical. Some of the roles that our volunteers have taken on during this response include data entry, building test kits, interpreting, vaccinators, scribes, screeners, registration, post administration, medical support for the Delaware Food Bank (and other events in our community), and supporting DE BEST providing mental health support.

What's in a name? We have had several changes to the Delaware Medical Reserve Corps (DMRC) now known as RespondDE. We have a new name which reflects the number of our volunteers who we needed during COVID-19 response to help us perform non-medical tasks such as registering patients, screening, scribing vaccine cards and forms, and a host of other activities probably too numerous to mention. RespondDE is still a Medical Reserve Corps and will always have trained health care volunteers supplementing the Delaware medical and public health workforce during disasters as part of our core mission.

Mindy Christine is now our new State Volunteer Coordinator as Elle Hammond has taken a new position within the EMS and Preparedness Section as a Planner III in the Office of EMS. We would like to thank Elle for her hard work in coordinating the volunteers especially during all the Covid-19 Vaccine PODs. Patrick Hirthler, who is a planner in the Office of Preparedness, has joined the RespondDE Team. He has been sending out messages and rostering volunteers for the COVID-19 events. Muriel Gillespie, who serves as our DHSS Disaster Coordinator, has been serving as the interim manager of RespondDE.

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New Castle County Delaware Special Operations Swiftwater rescue assets on 14th and Heald St., Wilmington, Delaware. Source: <https://governor.delaware.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2021/09/Delaware-Ida-Presidential-Disaster-Declaration-Request.pdf>

WILMINGTON FLOODING RESPONSE

On the heels of Labor Day weekend 2021, Tropical Depression Ida produced record-breaking rainfall resulting in historic flooding across the Northeastern U.S. Prior to September 2, 2021, the last major flood in New Castle County was in 2003. Eighteen years later, a section of the City of Wilmington that had never experienced this level of flooding was under water. Storm impact as detailed by the State of Delaware Office of the Governor (2021):

Tropical Depression Ida interacted with a frontal system and produced 100-year rainfall returns in the Brandywine Creek basin. Heavy rains in Pennsylvania fell into Brandywine Creek, and flooding runoff flowed into Delaware on September 2, 2021. Flooding from heavy rainfall caused considerable damage to residential and commercial structures and vehicles in the areas of the eastern portion of the City of Wilmington, as well as pockets along the Brandywine Creek from Talleyville through Edgemoor. The Brandywine Creek in Wilmington rose to 23.14 feet Thursday morning, breaking its previous record of 20.43 feet in 2014. Flooding in Wilmington stretched between I-495 and Market Street, with the most significant impact in a 15 to 20 block area along the creek. In the early morning hours of September 2, 2021, water rescues were conducted in the Riverside neighborhood, with 200 people evacuated from the flood waters. (page 1)

City of Wilmington Emergency Management, New Castle County Delaware Special Operations Swiftwater rescue and local first responders arrived on scene initially. No deaths or significant injuries were reported. Preparedness plans were quickly activated. As local city and county response efforts were underway, the disaster was closely monitored at the state level. City of Wilmington Office of Emergency Management Director Willie J. Fitzpatrick informed the Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA) that state assets were to be required to further respond. DHSS, DPH, Emergency Medical Services and Preparedness Section (EMSPS) assumed the lead coordinating agency role as outlined in the DPH Community Recovery Concept of Operations Plan.

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SEVERE WEATHER AND HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS TIPS

1. Be prepared to follow any evacuation order given by your local officials. They issue evacuation orders for both YOUR safety and FIRST RESPONDER safety. Remember that if you choose not to heed an evacuation order and decide to stay behind to "ride it out," first responders **will not be able to get to you** in the event of an emergency until the situation and conditions improve.
2. Make sure emergency alerts are enabled on your phone or weather radio. These alerts can be sent from the National Weather Service, the Federal Government, local/state law enforcement and officials, your local/state emergency management agency, and the President of the United States (in the event of a national emergency). These alerts are critical in informing the population of a disaster or emergency, which may come with little to no warning, of immediate actions that need to be taken to ensure your safety and survival.
3. Make a family emergency plan and be sure to practice and review it regularly.
4. If you must go out during severe weather, let someone know when you're leaving and how long that you expect to be traveling.
5. Have emergency cash with you in case of power loss/ electrical grid failure. ATMs will be unavailable to use during a power outage.

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SEVERE WEATHER AND HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS TIPS (CONT. FROM PAGE 3)

6. Do not drive, walk, or swim through high flood waters.

Flood waters can be very deceiv-ing and can hide washed out road or dangerous debris. It only takes 6 inches of moving water to knock a person over and a foot of moving water to sweep your vehicle away! **RE-MEMBER: Turn around, don't drown!**

7. Buy portable power banks and have them fully charged if there is some warning time. These can keep your phone charged if your electricity goes out for an extended period of time so you can continue to receive important alerts or notifications.

8. Make sure you have enough water and non-perishable food for each member of your family (including pets) for at least three days, but be prepared to have food and water for up to a week.

9. Ensure all your important documents (titles, birth certificates, social security cards, homeowners/renters insurance policies, etc.) are stored in either a fireproof/waterproof safe or container or in a password-protected digital space so they are not damaged or destroyed in a disaster.

10. If you're in a flood-prone area, consider buying flood insurance since most homeowner's insurance policies do not cover damage from flooding.

Check out other tips for all kinds of disasters/emergencies at www.ready.gov

MULTIPLE PLANS INTO ACTION

"This is not a drill!" exclaimed Muriel Gillespie late in the workday prior to the Labor Day weekend. Gillespie, DHSS Disaster Coordinator and DEMA Human Services Branch Director, repeated her alert as she covered the hallways and offices of the Public Health's State Health Emergency Operations Center. She was providing notice to Office of Preparedness staff paid through the Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) grant to stand ready.

To initiate the overarching DPH Recovery Concept of Operations Plan, Gillespie began notifications via phone, text, and email to all 10 DHSS division directors and numerous social service partners. Notifications and directives continued throughout the holiday weekend to secure all necessary resources and ensure personnel were in place to implement multiple plans related to disaster and recovery. In accordance with the plan, a Call Center supported by Division of Social Services was activated.

To support evacuees in accordance with the DHSS Mass Care Plan, two reception centers were activated, one of which had transitioned to a Community Shelter. RespondDE was activated to staff both the Reception Center and Community Shelters. RespondDE consists of pre-credentialed and pre-trained medical and non-medical volunteers who strengthen the public health infrastructure, improve emergency preparedness response, and increase community resilience in Delaware.

As the flood water began to recede, Gillespie's team was in non-stop response activity from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday over the holiday weekend. They canvassed seven city blocks of the impacted neighborhood to address immediate needs such as food, safety, shelter, and mental well-being. Along with Gillespie and emergency responders, the canvassing team included social workers, mental health specialists, and environmental scientists. Referrals were made to Division of State Service Centers to begin the process of housing residents in hotels who could not stay in their homes and who were afraid to stay in shelters because of COVID-19. All visited households were informed of and provided a flyer for the upcoming State-run Recovery Center to be open on Tuesday, September 7, 2021.

The center was staffed with 50 workers and 45 volunteers representing 21 agencies, including the City of Wilmington, Wilmington Housing Authority, The Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, Food Bank of Delaware, American Red Cross, Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD), and RespondDE. State agencies represented included the Delaware Department of Labor, Delaware Behavioral & Emotional Support Team, DHSS Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, Division of State Service Centers, Division of Social Services, DPH and Delaware Animal Re-sponse, Small Business Administration, DEMA, and the Delaware Authority for Regional Transit. The Warehouse, an innovative multi-partner teen community center located within the impacted neighborhood, offered space to host the event with-in walking distance for those utilizing the center. Critical resources are outlined in a specific plan developed by DPH. Assembling these partners was the result of the marathon of phone notifications conducted and directives occurring over the holiday weekend about how residents' specific needs could be met in the most efficient and effective way possible.

PHEP CAPABILITY PLANNING BACKGROUND

Continual preparedness planning had been underway prior to this rare and historic Delaware flood, which enabled plans to be quickly enacted despite the infrequency of this event. The Office of Preparedness invited partners to an August 2019 meeting to examine to examine the Disaster Recovery Center Plan last updated in 2008. Tim Cooper, Director of the Office of Preparedness within DPH, shared that because the Community Recovery Capabilities Annex was too large to review within one year, disaster recovery planning would be a multi-year process. Throughout 2019 and 2020, the Disaster Recovery Center Plan was extensively updated. Cooper and the Preparedness Planning Team made plans to hold a table-top exercise to test these revisions with after-action analyses; however, the full focus of the Office of Preparedness shifted to COVID-19 response and existing projects were placed on hold.

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Despite the focus on COVID response, PHEP-funded staff completed the next part of recovery planning, including the development of a Recovery Center Concept of Operations in 2021. The Disaster Recovery Center Plan and resulting Recovery Plan Concept of Operations remained untested until the 2021 Labor Day weekend when flood waters inundated Northeast Wilmington. Instead, the true test and resulting robust response was executed in real time. Although preparedness partners had not foreseen using the untested Disaster Recovery Center Plan, its framework proved to be invaluable since extensive preparedness work was based in functions outlined by PHEP capabilities. PHEP funding provided to the Office of Preparedness that enabled planning teams to engage in this work prior to the unanticipated flood.

Governor John Carney requested a Major Disaster Declaration for the State of Delaware during the period of September 1, 2021, through September 7, 2021. Recovery efforts continue and an after-action review is underway.

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Governor John Carney tours the state-run Recovery Center at the Warehouse Teen Community Center on Thatcher Street in the impacted Riverside Neighborhood of Wilmington with Delaware Department of Health and Social Services Coordinator Muriel Gillespie. Source: [Delaware Department of Health and Social Services \(DHSS\) Facebook page.](#)

RespondDE—What’s in a Name? (CONT.) from page 2

As many of you know, the contract with the University of Delaware and the Division of Public Health for Volunteer Management ended on July 1, 2021. We also want to thank the University of Delaware and Ingrid Hanson, Professor of Nursing, Bethany Hall-Long, and Celeste Pearl for their hard work in coordinating the (DRMC) for so many years. The University of Delaware will continue to manage the DE BEST with the Division of Substance Abuse of Mental Health.

We would not have had the response we had if not for our strong Medical Reserve Support. According to DeAnn Hollis, “the heart of a **volunteer** is not measured in size, but by the depth of the commitment to make a difference in the lives of others.” Your commitment to our communities in Delaware is very strong and appreciated by all of us.

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WINTER STORM PREPAREDNESS

November is a beautiful time of year in Delaware. The leaves are turning, the weather is crisp, and we are slowly closing out the fall season. The beauty of November also brings a drastic change in weather. While hurricane season winds down by the end of November, we move into the beginning of the cold winter in Delaware, in December. According to the Center for Environmental Monitoring & Analysis (CEMA), January is the coldest month and February typically has the most snowfall at all stations across Delaware. (CEMA, n.d.). On average, Delaware gets 45 inches of precipitation a year, with average snowfall of 20.20” at Wilmington Airport, 13.20” in Dover and 10.50” in Lewes (CEMA, n.d.). While Delaware is not the coldest nor the snowiest state, we certainly get our fair share of winter weather events that can best be managed with some preparedness.

Older adults face unique challenges and risks with cold weather and winter storms. Snow, ice and wind can lead to power outages. Loss of power to a home in the winter months impacts the ability to keep the home heated and adequately lit. This can be particularly dangerous for older adults. As we age, the ability to sense changes in skin temperature decreases. In response to cold environments, this means a reduced ability to both generate and maintain body heat, subsequently increasing risk for hypothermia and frostbite. Age-related vision changes include increased difficulty seeing clearly in lower light settings and with light and dark adaptation, such as transitioning from a brighter room into a darker room. Inadequate lighting may increase fall and injury risk.

Loss of power due to a winter storm can also impact refrigerator use for medications and the continued operation of any powered medical equipment. A portable residential generator is one option to be considered when sheltering in place, but does come with pros and cons. A portable residential generator supplies backup power typically to between two and four appliances via the use of extension cords. Setup and use require transporting the generator to a safe location, filling with gas, connecting the extension cords, starting the generator and maintaining it throughout the time of use, which may include multiple refills dependent upon how long the power is out. This also may require storing large quantities of gasoline for use with the generator during the event, as there may not be access to a gas station during the actual power outage. It is recommended to locate the portable generator on a flat surface within ten feet from the house in order to decrease risk of carbon monoxide entering the home. Other considerations are run-time, noise and of course, price.

Winter storms may bring ice and snow. Icy and snowy conditions increase the risk for slips and falls, as well as the possibility of overexertion and/or injury when shoveling. Other common risks during the winter months are fires and carbon monoxide poisoning. Heat sources such as fireplaces, wood and gas stoves need to be properly vented, cleaned and used to decrease chance of leaking carbon monoxide. Additional care and consideration also need to be taken when using any of these heat sources, including space heaters, as they can be a fire hazard. Make sure that you have working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors to help you to stay safe.

Making a plan, making a kit and staying informed are the three essential preparedness steps to maximize your safety and wellbeing while sheltering in place during the winter or in any emergency. Detailed information can be found on PrepareDE.org, however, here are some basic tips:

1. Stay Informed – Make sure you can receive emergency alerts and have a way to monitor the weather.

Sign up for the Delaware Emergency Notification System (DENS) <https://dema.delaware.gov/onlineServices/index.shtml?dc=dens>

Consider purchasing a NOAA Weather Radio as a backup

Monitor the weather through NWS Philadelphia/Mt. Holly through their website <https://www.weather.gov/phi/>

Monitor road conditions through the DelDOT App <https://deldot.gov/mobile/> or their website <https://deldot.gov>

2. Make a Plan – Help reduce your risk!

Have a list of important phone numbers and keep it by your phone.

Have family members check in on a regular basis – schedule it! (see Preparedness Buddy in the resources) If this isn't possible, check if your community has a senior roll call program.

Have people you can call to help with snow removal, etc.

Every year nearly 12,000 people in the US are treated in emergency departments for injuries related to snow shoveling.

Arrange to have your stairs, walkways, and driveways cleared of snow and ice.

Limit travel during severe weather and icy conditions.

3. Make a Kit - <https://www.prepared.org/make-a-kit/>

Make an emergency kit with supplies in case you need to leave your home

Keep your kitchen stocked with non-perishable food and water.

Have a supply of prescriptions and other medications in case you can't leave the house for a few days.

Be prepared for power outages by keeping electronic devices charged, having flashlights, and backup batteries. If you require specialized medical equipment, consider having an emergency generator.

Know where you can go or what to do to safely stay warm if you lose heat due to a storm. Make sure that you have warm clothing, blankets, etc. as well.

If you need help with home energy bills, including help to pay for home heating both routinely and/or during an emergency, the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) administers the Delaware Energy Assistance Program (DEAP) which can help.

Go to <https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dssc/liheap.html> or contact your local State Service Center to learn more.

References & Resources

Center for Environmental Monitoring & Analysis (CEMA). (n.d.). Retrieved October 14, 2021, from [CEMA: Center for Environmental Monitoring & Analysis \(udel.edu\)](https://www.cema.udel.edu/)

Preparedness Buddy: <https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/php/preparednessbuddy.html>

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RESPONDDE INFORMATION

RespondDE Medical Reserve Corps (RespondDE MRC) is sponsored by Delaware Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Emergency Medical Services and Preparedness Section. RespondDE MRC is a group of dedicated health care professionals and community members who are ready to lend their support in the event of a public health emergency or activity. Unit members participate in a variety of preparedness, response and health initiatives. These volunteers are trained under the direction of the U.S. Office of the Surgeon General to act in the event of a public health crisis and are ready to serve when they receive a call. RespondDE MRC is actively recruiting medical and non-medical volunteers to help with disaster preparedness and Public Health Initiatives. Interested individuals are encouraged to visit the State Emergency Registry of Volunteers and Healthcare Personnel for Delaware website, <https://www.servde.org> to register.

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SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/DE_Respond

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/RespondDE>

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/respond_de

RespondDE Calendar

RespondDE Quarterly Meeting

TBD (We will send out more information when they become available, so stay tuned!)

RespondDE Links and Resources

RespondDE Website (new website under construction)

<https://delawaremrc.org>

Delaware Office of Preparedness

<https://www.preparedde.org>

National MRC

<https://www.phe.gov/MRC/Pages/default.aspx>

<https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/php/emsp.html>

FEMA 2021 Preparedness Calendar

<https://www.ready.gov/calendar>

Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA)

<https://dema.delaware.gov>