

Montana Disaster and Emergency Services

NEWS RELEASE

For Release: September 9, 2009

Contact Information:

F. Guy Youngblood (406) 431-7798, e-mail: President@mtvoad.org

Monique T. Lay (406) 841-3911

Vigilant Guard 2009 – Montana Volunteer Organizations to Participate in Earthquake Exercise

Helena - If you close your eyes and imagine, you can almost hear the breakfast dishes rattle and feel the walls sway when Montana Vigilant Guard '09 rumbles across the Helena Valley on September 15 during a simulated earthquake event. While response systems for multiple jurisdictions will be participating in the exercise, as in every disaster, the voluntary agencies will be playing a vital role.

The Montana Chapter of American Red Cross and local representatives of the Northwest Division of the Salvation Army will combine forces to offer shelter to the homeless. As the evacuees arrive, their companion animals will be sheltered by Noah's Wish and the Humane Society of the United States. Because the notionally dispossessed will be in the thousands, the Montana Food Bank Network will exercise its procedures for receiving emergency requests, processing the requests, and providing bulk food to multiple disaster sites (e.g., shelters, work sites) in a timely manner. Even in a simulated emergency, hungry workers must be fed. Southern Baptist Conference Disaster Response of Montana will deploy its field kitchen and prepare two meals a day for those participating in the exercise.

"Every disaster is traumatic," says Guy Youngblood, President of the Montana Volunteers Organization Active in Disaster (MTVOAD). "Long before recovery begins, both victims and responders are in need of spiritual and emotional care". HOPE Animal Assisted Crisis Response will be working with simulated victims and shelter occupants, as well as first responders. Lutheran Disaster Response will test its ability to organize to provide care in accordance with the NVOAD Spiritual Care Points of Consensus.

Disasters of this magnitude typically bring forth spontaneous volunteers. Greater Gallatin United Way, United Way of Lewis & Clark County, and United Way of Yellowstone County will test their ability to organize to provide mutual aid support for Broadwater, Jefferson, and Lewis & Clark Counties for the management of unaffiliated volunteers.

All of these actions will be coordinated with our parent organizations and with other response/recovery agencies through the State Emergency Coordination Center.

###

Note to Media:

The animal shelter will be set up Thursday, September 17th at the Fairgrounds.

The Red Cross Shelter will be set up Tuesday the 15th through Thursday the 17th at the Salvation Army

HOPE Canines will be at the Red Cross Shelter (Salvation Army) on Thursday September 17th