

# Fire Corps Toolkit

for Citizen Corps Councils

SECOND EDITION



*Helping to Make Our Communities Safer, Stronger, & Better Prepared*





Dear Citizen Corps Council Representative:

Welcome to the *Fire Corps Toolkit for Citizen Corps Councils*, created exclusively for you by Fire Corps. This *Toolkit* is a compilation of the tools and resources you'll need to promote and support Fire Corps programs in your region, state, or community, helping you to reach out to your local fire and emergency service departments as well as to citizen volunteers.

The *Fire Corps Toolkit for Citizen Corps Councils* includes a sample letter you can send to your local fire or EMS chiefs introducing them to Fire Corps, as well as a *Department Starter Kit* you can disseminate to departments, providing them with the tools and resources they'll need to start and implement a program locally. This *Toolkit* also contains a sample press release announcing a new Fire Corps program or activity in your area, brochures you can disseminate throughout your community, and promotional Fire Corps videos and public service announcements that you can use to educate departments as well as citizens on how Fire Corps can help their communities.

All of the resources highlighted in this *Toolkit*, plus additional materials and resources as well as a complete list of registered Fire Corps programs, are available online at [www.firecorps.org](http://www.firecorps.org). Please do not hesitate to contact us at 1-888-FC-INFO1 (324-6361) or [info@firecorps.org](mailto:info@firecorps.org) for more information or to request additional materials, including a hard copy version of this *Toolkit*. We are proud to be your partner in helping to make our communities safer, stronger, and better prepared.

Sincerely,

*Sarah Lee, Acting Director*

PROUD PARTNERS OF  
*citizen*  *corps*

# ABOUT FIRE CORPS

Fire and emergency service departments across the nation struggle with increasing demands for service coupled with inadequate funding. Firefighters and EMS personnel must now respond to natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and other emergencies. The Fire Corps program was launched in 2004 in an effort to help departments face these increasing demands. Fire Corps' mission is to increase the capacity of volunteer, career, and combination departments through the use of community volunteers in non-emergency roles. By recruiting non-emergency help, first responders can devote more time to emergency response and training. In addition, non-emergency volunteers allow departments to expand their services, such as enhancing fire prevention programs or supplying food and water to emergency personnel through a rehab/canteen unit.

Fire Corps was launched to complement Citizen Corps and its program partners: Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), Neighborhood Watch/USAOnWatch, and Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS). Citizen Corps and these partner programs share a common goal to have everyone in America help communities prevent, prepare for, and respond to natural disasters, terrorism, crime, public health issues, and other emergencies. With the creation of Fire Corps, Citizen Corps offers volunteer opportunities for community members to support each of the emergency responder disciplines.

The foundation of this national initiative to help local fire/EMS departments is the Fire Corps web site, located at [www.firecorps.org](http://www.firecorps.org). This web site serves as a gateway to information for fire and emergency service departments looking to establish or expand a Fire Corps program, as well as for community members interested in becoming non-emergency volunteers for their local fire or EMS departments. The web site includes a [searchable directory](#) that is a resource for those interested in networking with departments offering similar or desired Fire Corps programs as well as citizens wishing to become involved.

To [register](#) as a Fire Corps program, an organization must be a fire or EMS department or directly affiliated with one; a local, state, or federal/government with offices pertaining to the fire or emergency services; or a local, state, or national not-for-profit organization representing the interests of the fire and emergency services.

# RESOURCES

The following tools and resources, which can be found on the website, [www.firecorps.org](http://www.firecorps.org), will help you reach out to fire and emergency service departments in your area regarding Citizen Corps and the Fire Corps program. Use these resources to show departments how they can achieve more, enhance and expand services, and create a vital link between the department and the community through Fire Corps. Many of these resources can also be used to educate the community about the exiting opportunities that Fire Corps offers. Additional resources, including a searchable database of all registered Fire Corps Programs, are available at [www.firecorps.org](http://www.firecorps.org)



## Outreach

### **Letter to Department Chief**

Fire Corps has created an introductory letter that will help you reach out to your local fire and emergency service departments to let them know how Citizen Corps and the Fire Corps program can help them to achieve more and serve their communities better. This letter can be used as-is or tailored to address specific needs facing your community. Print the letter on your Citizen Corps Council letterhead and use it as a tool for introducing a department to Citizen Corps and Fire Corps. Follow up the letter with a phone call to personally introduce yourself and answer any questions the fire/EMS chief or department representative may have.

### **Press Release**

A press release is a great way to inform the local community about Citizen Corps opportunities such as Fire Corps. Press releases can be used to publicize upcoming events and activities, feature success stories and accomplishments, announce specific volunteer opportunities or raise awareness about issues affecting Citizen Corps, its mission, and its partner programs. Fire Corps has created a sample press release to help you notify your community of a new, local Fire Corps program. Customize this press release by filling in the specified information, or use it as a foundation for developing your own press release. Mail, email, or fax your press release to local

media outlets, such as newspapers, radio or television stations, and local Internet sources. Consider including photographs or camera-ready art with your press release; this may increase your chances of publication and make your message more appealing to readers.

### **State Advocate Network**

State Advocates serve as the point of contact for Citizen Corps Councils, fire and EMS departments, and Fire Corps programs within their assigned geographic areas. These representatives can answer any questions that you may have and assist you with marketing the program in your area. Visit the [Fire Corps web site](#) to learn more about the State Advocate Network and to find and contact your state or local Advocate.

## Brochures

### **Citizen Brochure**

This brochure explains the Fire Corps program and outlines how citizens can help their local fire/EMS department by fulfilling non-emergency roles. Place these throughout your community to make them readily available to prospective volunteers. Consider asking local businesses to pass them out, put them on display in your community library, share them with your local volunteer center, or work with your area fire/EMS departments to distribute them in neighborhoods or at community events. This free brochure can easily be



ordered through the U.S. Fire Administration's [online catalog](#). Please allow two to three weeks for delivery. For quantities of over 100, please call the USFA Publication Center at 1-800-561-3356 between 7:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

### **Citizen Brochure (Spanish)**

The citizen brochure is also available in Spanish and can be ordered free of charge by contacting Fire Corps toll-free at 1-888-FC-INFO1 (324-6361) or email [info@firecorps.org](mailto:info@firecorps.org). Quantities may be limited.

### **Department Brochure**

This brochure is specifically designed for educating fire/EMS departments and other civic organizations in your area about Fire Corps. A detachable response card enables interested parties to register their own Fire Corps program, as well as to request more specific information from the Fire Corps national office. For more information about obtaining this free brochure, please contact Fire Corps toll-free at 1-888-FC-INFO1 (324-6361) or email [info@firecorps.org](mailto:info@firecorps.org).

## **Kits**

### **Department Starter Kit**

Although educating departments in your state and region about Citizen Corps programs such as Fire Corps is a valuable endeavor, the impact of your message will be much greater if you also provide them with the tools they need to implement these programs. For that reason, Fire Corps developed the *Fire Corps Department Starter Kit* designed to provide fire and emergency service depart-

ments with the tools and resources they need to successfully implement and maintain a Fire Corps program in their community. The *Department Starter Kit* provides everything from administrative forms, such as volunteer applications and liability waivers, to marketing tools that can be used to educate departments and citizens about the value of participating in a Fire Corps program.

You may consider sending a *Fire Corps Department Starter Kit* with the previously mentioned *Introductory Letter to the Department Chief*, or otherwise making them available to departments in your Council's area. Additional copies can be ordered through Fire Corps by calling 1-888-FC-INFO1 (324-6361), emailing [info@firecorps.org](mailto:info@firecorps.org), or downloading the document from [www.firecorps.org](http://www.firecorps.org).

## **Promotional Videos**

First-hand experiences and testimonials are a great way to capture an audience's attention. Fire Corps has two promotional videos which feature personal interviews and testimonials from government officials, department personnel, and Fire Corps volunteers from departments across the nation. These promotional videos are a great way to share the many benefits of implementing and participating in a Fire Corps program.

The first video, *Achieve More with Fire Corps*, reaches out to departments looking for non-operational assistance through Fire Corps. Interviews with government officials and department personnel demonstrate how Fire Corps programs have been making a positive impact in communities across the country. With testimonials from individuals such as Senator John McCain (R-AZ) and Governor Tim Kaine (VA), this video illustrates the successes of several Fire Corps programs, provides advice on implementing a program, and exemplifies how and why Fire Corps programs are imperative to the depart-

ments and communities they protect. This video can be used to educate departments in your area or region about Fire Corps.

The second video, ***Citizens Helping Fire and EMS***, reaches out to community members to encourage and motivate them to become involved in Fire Corps programs. This video explains how departments are utilizing the time and talents of community members to fill non-operational roles, and how these community members have benefited personally from their involvement in Fire Corps. Consider showing the video at community events, such as your regional, state, or local Citizen Corps Conference, or at a fair, festival, or community meeting. You may also wish to work with your local cable provider and television stations to air the video on TV. Consider making this video available to other volunteer sources within your community, such as your local volunteer center, schools, colleges, churches, and other civic organizations, as these groups may be interested in supporting their communities through Fire Corps.

## PSAs

Public service announcements (PSAs) are a great way to reach your target audience with an important message in a very short amount of time. Fire Corps has developed a series of PSAs to assist your Citizen Corps Council in reaching out both to departments who would benefit from the Fire Corps program, and to prospective volunteers within your area or region who may be interested in assisting their local fire/EMS agency.

Many local radio and television stations, cable networks, and newspapers will donate air time or print space for PSAs. You can also personalize these PSAs to include your Citizen Corps Council's name and contact information so that interested people can contact your Council directly. Some local media outlets may be willing to donate this service.

### **Department and Citizen PSAs**

These 30-second video PSAs are designed to assist your Council in informing departments in your area about the benefits of Fire Corps and in targeting potential Fire Corps volunteers through your local television and cable stations.

### **Video PSA featuring Brian Williams**

NBC newscaster Brian Williams recorded this video PSA that you can use in your community to target potential Fire Corps volunteers and garner support for your local Fire Corps program.

### **Radio PSA featuring Erron Kinney**

Firefighter and former NFL player Erron Kinney recorded this radio PSA which focuses on the need for community members to play a role in the non-emergency functions of their fire/EMS department through Fire Corps.

### **Radio PSAs - Spanish**

Fire Corps developed two radio PSAs that you can use to target Spanish-speaking populations with the Fire Corps message.

### **Print PSAs**

Fire Corps has developed various print ads in both English and Spanish. Post these in your Council's newsletter, submit to local periodicals, or forward to state and local organizations to recruit volunteers.

You can find all the above PSAs and more on the [Market a Program page](#).

## Request Materials

Is your Council hosting a conference, meeting, or other event? You can share information about Fire Corps by requesting materials to support your function. Use the [Materials Request form](#) to request a Fire Corps display, brochures, and other Fire Corps materials for your activity or event. Whether your event is large or small, using these items is a great way to increase awareness of the program and to meet and recruit potential volunteers.



[www.firecorps.org](http://www.firecorps.org)



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