

2017 Disaster Response Coordinator Activities

By Jim Truitt

The following is a summary of the key activities undertaken by the PNW DRC and the PNW Disaster Response team in 2017:

- Represented the PNW Annual Conference and UMCOR at the semi-monthly Washington Volunteers Organizations Active in Disasters (WAVOAD) meetings. Served as an at large member of the WAVOAD leadership team
- Presented breakout sessions on Rebuild: Up From the Ashes at two District training events and gave presentations at several churches to inform the congregations about United Methodist activities associated with the recovery from the wildfires of 2014 and 2015 and the need for finances and volunteers; over \$220,000 has been raised through the efforts of the United Methodist Church
- Taught the Basic Early Response Team (ERT) training and ERT 200 level classes to qualify new ERT volunteers and refresh those who received the training more than three years ago
- As an ERT trainer and an UMCOR ERT trainer evaluator, I evaluated new ERT trainers in the OR-ID and Cal-Pac Conferences.
- Partnered with FEMA and the Washington Emergency Management Department (EMD) to present five workshops across the state on disaster response and long-term recovery
- Partnered with the Western Jurisdiction (WJ) DRCs to plan and execute the third WJ Disaster Response Academy in Ontario, California
- Authored and taught the first ever class on ERT response to wildfires; this class is now one of the ERT 200 Level classes provided by UMCOR
- Collaborated with ERT volunteer Dana Bryson and UMCOR to develop two additional ERT 200 Level classes on personal safety and logistics management; the safety class has been approved by UMCOR and the logistics management class is under review
- Collaborated with ERT volunteer Steve Meacham to develop a Conference policy which resulted in approval to train and deploy chainsaw teams under the auspices of the ERT program; four volunteers have been trained and approved as members of the PNW chainsaw team with their first deployment in Okanogan clearing burned trees that posed a threat to one of the homes under construction. Two of them have since responded to a request in Texas following Hurricane Harvey.
- Partnered with the Region IV Mennonite Disaster Service to supplement their volunteers rebuilding homes in Saipan following typhoon Soudelor. About 50 UM volunteers from across the United States responded to the call and spent three weeks in Saipan working with the Mennonites building/rebuilding homes.
- ERT volunteer Wendy Riddle and I responded to a request from the Yakima County EMD to perform damage assessments in Outlook, WA following the breach of a large holding pond that flooded several homes.
- Consulted with the Inland West Long Term Recovery Group and the Spokane Valley EMD responding to a high water situation in Spokane Valley. Provided guidance and council

on how best to assess and respond to the 77 requests for assistance from citizens impacted by the high water and how to assist them with long-term recovery. Collaborated with the INW LTRG, WAVOAD and the OCLTRG to provide Disaster Case Management support for the recovery efforts. PNW ERTs performed initial assessments and muck-outs of several of the affected homes.

- Continued to work with the Okanogan County Long Term Recovery Group (OCLTRG) in the recovery from the 2014 and 2015 fires. Rosalee Mohney has been instrumental in recruiting and coordinating UM teams making the trip to the Okanogan to help with the rebuilds. About 14 UM teams with 133 total volunteers provided 3,850 hours of volunteer labor in 2017.
- I responded to a request from National VOAD, FEMA and the Texas EMD and spent three and a half weeks working out of the FEMA Joint Field Office in Austin, Texas. My primary responsibility was to partner with FEMA and TX EMD Voluntary Agency Liaisons (VAL) to help the local long-term recovery groups get organized and functioning effectively.
- Attended the UMCOR Disaster Response Symposium at Sager Brown. Worked with other DRCs to improve training, response protocols, and communication across Jurisdictions and Conferences.
- Marysville UMC used one of our ERT tool trailers to transport cleaning kits (flood buckets) to UMCOR West.
- I participate in regular WJ DRC, UMCOR DRC, NVOAD, Inland VOAD, and OCLTRG conference calls.
- Worked with the DRCs and ERT Coordinators for the Greater Northwest Episcopal Area to develop a proposal and submit a grant request to UMCOR for funding to purchase three shower trailers to be shared by the three conferences in the Episcopal area. The grant request was approved and the three trailers were delivered in early December. The trailers will be deployed during disaster responses, VIM trips and shared with Conferences within the Jurisdiction when the need arises. (We are currently coordinating with the Cal-Pac Conference to loan them one or more of the trailers in support of the California wildfires recovery efforts.) UMCOR really liked our grant request and asked us to share it with two east coast Conferences who were also seeking shower trailers.
- Stan Norman and Gerri Harvill continued to provide financial management support to the OCLTRG. They managed the expenditure of two Red Cross grants and one UMCOR grant plus donations received for the Rebuild: Up From the Ashes campaign. In addition, they represented the UM at the Unmet Needs table and home dedications.

Jim Truitt serves as the Disaster Response Coordinator (DRC) for PNW United Methodist Volunteers in Mission.