



CERT---What is it?

Community Emergency Response Teams, or CERT, is a concept developed in 1985 by the Los Angeles Fire Department. They recognized that citizens would very likely be on their own during the early stages of a catastrophic disaster. Accordingly, the LAFD decided that some basic training in disaster survival and rescue skills would be necessary to improve the ability of citizens to survive until emergency personnel could arrive. Thus, CERT teams were created to provide vital services in the absence of emergency responders. Today, more than 38 states and several foreign countries institute the CERT system. In Bergen County alone there are over 500 CERT members.

The events of September 11 will never be forgotten; also not forgotten is how the spirit of America was awakened that day and citizens came forth to volunteer their services. President George W. Bush harnessed this spirit of volunteerism with the Citizen Corps Program. CERT is a part of the Citizen Corps Program.

Role of CERTs in an Emergency

CERTS have been used to:

- Search for lost or kidnapped children
- Promote community awareness of potential hazards and preparedness measures
- Assist in evacuations and traffic control
- Staff Emergency Operations Centers
- Emergency Operations Center security; driving, information, assisting disabled visitors and minor first aid
- Supplement staffing at special events such as parades
- Manage "spontaneous/convergent" volunteers
- Assist Red Cross and other relief organizations on mass care
- Light search and rescue operations

How Can I Join?

If you want to volunteer your services and become trained to protect yourself and families from disasters; natural or man-made..... *Become a CERT member.*

To become a CERT member you must be at least 18 years of age and preferably possess a valid driver's license.

Course Overview

The CERT training consists of 20-24 hours of instruction over an eight-week period. Classes are taught by emergency responders, including firefighters, emergency medical and law enforcement personnel from your community. The course includes the following:

Session I: Disaster Preparedness

Introduction to disasters specific to the community, and the impact of disaster on infrastructure

Session II: Disaster Fire Suppression

Identifying and reducing potential hazards and basic fire suppression

Session III: Disaster Medical Operations Part I

Treatment strategies for life-threatening conditions and principles of triage

Session IV: Disaster Medical Operations Part II

Head-to-toe patient assessment and treatment for various injuries

Session V: Light Search & Rescue Operations

Techniques for sizing up and searching, lifting, cribbing and removing victims; rescue safety

Session VI: Disaster Psychology & Team Organization

The post-disaster emotional environment will be discussed. CERT organization, decision making and documentation.

Session VII: Terrorism

A brief overview of terrorism weapons. Identifying targets in an area and discuss time/distance/shielding.

Session VIII: Final Exercise

Disaster Simulation realistic to your community.

COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS

"We will ask State and local officials to create a new, modern civil defense service, similar to local volunteer fire departments, to respond to local emergencies when the manpower of government is stretched thin."

- President Bush (Nov. 8, 2001)

CERT is one answer to the President's challenge.