



CERT Basic Training

Instructor Guide



FEMA



HISTORY OF THE CERT BASIC TRAINING

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program is a nationally supported, locally implemented initiative that teaches people how to better prepare themselves for hazards that may affect their communities. CERT trains them in basic disaster response skills such as team organization, disaster medical operations, fire safety, and light search and rescue. Local CERT programs train and organize teams of volunteers to assist their families, neighbors, co-workers, and other community members during emergencies when professional responders may not be immediately available to provide assistance. Before, during, and after disasters, CERT volunteer teams perform basic response activities, including checking in on neighbors, distributing information to the public, supporting emergency operations centers, and helping to manage traffic and crowds. The ability for CERT volunteers to perform these activities frees up professional responders to focus their efforts on more complex, essential, and critical tasks. CERT volunteers also support their communities by organizing, promoting, and participating in emergency preparedness events, activities, and projects.

The Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) developed the CERT program after examining the civilian response to disasters in Mexico and Japan in 1985. The LAFD recognized that citizens are likely to be on their own during the early stages of disaster. Under these circumstances, family members, co-workers, and neighbors will often spontaneously come to the aid of each other. While untrained volunteers can be very effective in aiding others, their lack of training puts them at risk for injury or death. For example, during the response to the 1985 Mexico City earthquake that claimed more than 10,000 lives, untrained volunteers saved 700 lives, but unfortunately, 100 volunteers died in the process.

In response, the LAFD decided to develop and offer disaster response training to Los Angeles residents so that during and after future disasters volunteers would be able to assist in a safe, responsible, and effective manner. The LAFD piloted the first CERT training in 1986. In turn, other fire departments around the country, including communities where the major threat is hurricanes rather than earthquakes, adopted the LAFD's training model. Building on this development, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) expanded the CERT materials in 1994 to make them applicable to all hazards and made the program available to communities nationwide. Since that time, thousands of dedicated trainers, organizations, and citizens have embraced the responsibility to learn new skills and become prepared to execute safe and effective emergency response capabilities.

The National CERT Program Office would like to thank the regional, state, and local partners and subject matter experts who contributed to the 2019 CERT Basic Training update.

A MODEL FOR COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS

The CERT program is critical in the effort to engage everyone in the United States in making their communities safer, more prepared, and more resilient when incidents occur.

Community-based preparedness planning allows us all to prepare for and respond to anticipated disruptions and potential hazards following a disaster. As individuals, we can prepare our homes and families to cope during that critical period. Through pre-event planning, neighborhoods, and worksites can also work together to help reduce injuries, loss of lives, and property damage. Neighborhood preparedness will enhance the ability of individuals and communities to reduce their emergency needs and to manage their existing resources until professional assistance becomes available.

Studies of behavior following disasters have shown that groups working together in the disaster period perform more effectively if there has been prior planning and training for disaster response. These studies also show that organized grassroots efforts may be more successful if they are woven into the social and political fabric of the community—neighborhood associations, schools, workplaces, places of worship, and other existing organizations.

Effective response, therefore, requires comprehensive planning and coordination of all who will be involved—government, volunteer groups, private businesses, schools, and community organizations. With training and information, individuals and community groups can be prepared to serve as a crucial resource capable of performing many of the emergency functions needed in the immediate post-disaster period. The CERT program trains individuals to be assets to help communities prepare for effective disaster response.

When Disaster Strikes

The damage caused by natural disasters, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods, or from manmade/technological events such as explosions or hazardous materials accidents can affect all aspects of a community, from government services to private enterprise to civic activities. These events:

- Severely restrict or overwhelm our response resources, communications, transportation, and utilities; and
- Leave many individuals and neighborhoods cut off from outside support.

Damaged roads and disrupted communications systems may restrict the access of emergency response agencies into critically affected areas. Thus, for the initial period immediately following a disaster—often up to three days or longer—individuals, households, and neighborhoods may need to rely on their own resources for:

- Food;
- Water; and
- Shelter.

Individual preparedness, planning, survival skills, and mutual aid within neighborhoods and worksites during this initial period are essential measures in managing the

aftermath of a disaster. What you do today will have a critical impact on the quality of your survival and your ability to help others safely and effectively. You will be more resilient to a potentially disruptive event by learning about the likely hazards in your community and your community's plans and protocols, understanding hazard-specific protective actions and response skills, assembling important emergency supplies, and mitigating potential hazards in your home. Subsequently, you will be an important asset to your family, neighbors, and other members of your community.

How CERTS Operate

As each CERT is organized and trained in accordance with standard operating procedures developed by the sponsoring agency, members identify potential meeting locations or staging areas to be used in the event of a disaster.

The staging area is where the fire department and other services will interact with CERTs. Having a centralized contact point makes it possible to communicate damage assessments and allocate volunteer resources more effectively. This is true for all CERTs, whether active in a neighborhood, workplace, school, college/university campus, or other venue.

Damage from disasters may vary considerably from one location to another. In an actual disaster, communities will deploy CERTs as needs dictate. Volunteers should assess their own needs and the priorities of those in their immediate environment first.

CERT volunteers who do not encounter a need in their immediate area should then report to their staging area, and the first volunteer to arrive will become the initial Team Leader (TL) for the disaster response. The TL may pass leadership to someone else as other volunteers arrive. Volunteers who find themselves in a heavily impacted location should send runners to staging areas to get assistance from available resources. Volunteers may use ham radios or similar technologies to increase communication capabilities and coordination.

CERTs provide an effective first-response capability. Acting as individuals first, then as team members, trained CERT volunteers can fan-out within their assigned areas, extinguish small fires, turn off natural gas at damaged homes, perform light search and rescue, and render basic medical treatment. CERTs also act as effective "eyes and ears" for uniformed emergency responders. Trained volunteers also offer an important potential workforce to service organizations in non-hazardous functions such as shelter support, crowd control, and evacuation.

About the CERT Basic Training

If available, emergency services personnel are the best trained and equipped to handle emergencies. Following a catastrophic disaster, however, you and your community may be isolated for an extended period for a myriad of reasons, including the size of the area affected, inoperable communications systems, or unpassable roads.

CERT Basic Training prepares you to help yourself and help others in the event of a catastrophic disaster. Because emergency services personnel will not be able to help everyone immediately, you can make a difference by using your CERT training to save lives and protect property.

This training covers basic skills that are important to know in a disaster when emergency services are not available. With training and practice, and by working as a team, you will be able to protect yourself and maximize your capability to help for the greatest number of people after a disaster.

COURSE AGENDA

The agenda for this course is outlined below (**Table 1: Course Agenda**). Please note that some adjustments to the agenda may be required to allow discussion of hazards specific to a community and—depending on class size—to allow all participants to take part in the exercise portions of this course.

Table 1: Course Agenda

Unit	Topics
1	<p>Disaster Preparedness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit Overview • Community Preparedness: Roles and Responsibilities • Hazards and Their Potential Impact • Home and Workplace Preparedness • Reducing the Impact of Hazards Through Mitigation • CERT Disaster Response • Additional Training for CERT Volunteers • Unit Summary
2	<p>CERT Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit Overview • CERT Organization • CERT Mobilization • Documentation • Unit Summary
3	<p>Disaster Medical Operations — Part 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit Overview • Treating Life – Threatening Conditions • Basic First Aid Care • Unit Summary
4	<p>Disaster Medical Operations — Part 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit Overview • Mass Casualty Incidents • Functions of Disaster Medical Operations • Establishing Medical Treatment Areas • Conducting Head-to-Toe Assessments • Public Health Considerations • Unit Summary
5	<p>Disaster Psychology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit Overview • Disaster Reactions • Self-Care and Team Well-Being • Working with Survivors' Emotional Responses • Unit Summary

Unit	Topics
6	Fire Safety and Utility Controls <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unit Overview• Fire Chemistry• Fire Size-up Considerations• Firefighting Resources• Fire Suppression Safety• Fire and Utility Hazards• Hazardous Materials• Unit Summary
7	Light Search and Rescue Operations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unit Overview• Safety During Search and Rescue Operations• Conducting Interior and Exterior Search Operations• Conducting Rescue Operations• Unit Summary
8	CERT and Terrorism <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unit Overview• Terrorist Goals and Tactics• Preparing Your Community• Active Shooter Situations• Until Help Arrives• Hazmat and CBRNE• Unit Summary
9	Course Review, Final Exam, and Disaster Simulation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unit Overview• Course Review• Final Exam• Disaster Simulation• Exercise Critique and Summary

AFTER CERT BASIC TRAINING

Upon completion of the CERT Basic Training course, participants will receive a certificate. Your community may also provide additional documents that will identify each participant as an emergency response team volunteer during disaster response. CERT volunteers should maintain their own CERT safety equipment, such as goggles, gloves, and basic first-aid supplies, and have them available for use during a disaster. Training in disaster response should not be a one-time event. Volunteers should reinforce their skills through follow-up training and repeated practice to maintain the edge necessary for effective response to a disaster.

To maintain their skill level and continually improve performance, CERT volunteers should continue to participate in supplemental training when offered in your area. Working through practice disaster scenarios with other teams will provide opportunities not only for extended practice, but also for valuable networking with teams in the local area.

INSTRUCTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Instructor Qualifications

The local sponsoring agency will recruit and select instructors to conduct this course based on potential instructors' working knowledge of the content and skills required for each session. The NCPO recommends that at least two instructors jointly conduct each session. Because Sessions 3 and 4 address disaster medical operations, the NCPO recommends these sessions be led by licensed or certified:

- Paramedics or Emergency Medical Technicians; and/or
- Nurses.

Further, it is recommended that all other sessions be conducted by skilled fire and rescue instructors who have completed the CERT Train-the-Trainer course. Instructors should also be knowledgeable about:

- The CERT model
- The types of hazards (natural, technological and accidental, terrorism, pandemics, and house fires) that present the greatest risk to the community;
- Local building structures that present the greatest hazard in the event of a disaster; and
- The community's emergency operation plan

Preparing To Train

The preparation and conduct of the instructor has a strong impact on the effectiveness of the training. This introductory section provides guidelines for preparing for this course.

1. Thoroughly read both the Instructor Guide and the Participant Manual.
2. Conduct a walk-through of all exercises and be prepared to answer any questions that the participants ask while completing the exercises themselves.
3. Tailor each session to your local community. Wherever possible, use local photographs of common fire hazards, local buildings, etc. Using local information will add a personal meaning for the participants and will help them to "buy into" the CERT concept.
4. Draft your own notes in the white space around the margins of this book. Include information that is specific to the community. Indicate points where you want to include additional local photographs.
5. Identify sessions that require you to prepare information or materials that relate specifically to your community (see "Preparation" at the beginning of each unit). Prepare these items in advance of the session.
6. Be certain you are aware of any cultural sensitivities for the community in which you will be training. It is important to understand how to deliver the content to the participants in the most effective and engaging manner. Because of the differences in individual cultures, it is essential to work with influential and

knowledgeable members of your community who can help you understand any topics in the training that may be culturally sensitive to specific cultural groups.

7. In advance of the training, meet with community representatives involved in emergency preparedness to discuss the different topics covered in the training. Together, try to identify any culturally sensitive issues, such as physical contact, medical response, or disaster psychology. Discuss how to present these topics in the most appropriate way for the participants.
8. During the training, do not pretend to be an expert on cultural issues but do invite participants to discuss culturally relevant topics. If possible, a member of the community in which you are training should co-teach the class.
9. Bear in mind several points regarding communities and cultures. First, when entering a new community, community members of that community may not accept you immediately. This is one reason to request information and seek the guidance and advice of community representatives regarding cultural issues. Additionally, remember that not all members of a community may have the same cultural background. Avoid making assumptions about the beliefs or attitudes of the participants.
10. Draft or copy any supplemental materials from which you feel the participants will benefit. Many supplemental materials may be available from local emergency management personnel or from such Federal agencies as the National Fire Academy, Emergency Management Institute, or National Severe Weather Center. If you use copyrighted materials, be sure to obtain copyright releases.
11. Instructors are encouraged to add pertinent information to the course, but they should not delete topics.

Preparing a Classroom

As an instructor, you are responsible for the room arrangement. This is your choice and, depending on the number of participants, you may opt for different arrangements. Regardless of the room arrangement you select, the training room must be large enough to accommodate the exercises for each session.

Equipment and Resources

For each session, you will need:

- A computer with PowerPoint software (PowerPoint 97 or more recent)
- A computer projector and screen
- Chart paper, easel, and markers
- Masking tape
- Pens and pencils

See below for session-specific equipment and materials notes for each unit (**Table 2: Equipment and Resource Checklist**).

Table 2: Equipment and Resource Checklist

Unit 1	Equipment/Supply Checklist
1	<p>Disaster Preparedness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scissors (1 for every 5 participants) • Tape (1 roll for every 5 participants) • Two pieces of cardboard, approximately 8 by 10 inches (1 set for every 5 participants) • Forty pieces of construction paper, 8.5 by 11 inches (1 set for every 5 participants)
2	<p>CERT Organization</p>
3	<p>Disaster Medical Operations — Part 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One mannequin (optional) • 1-liter bottle • Tourniquet if available (preferably one for every two students) • Non-latex examination gloves (one pair per participant) • 4- by 4-inch dressings (one for each participant) • One triangular bandage per participant • Splinting material (e.g., cardboard, magazines, pieces of lath, pillows, towels) • Note cards • Duct tape
4	<p>Disaster Medical Operations — Part 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One mannequin (optional) • 1-liter bottle • Tourniquet if available (preferably one for every two students) • Non-latex examination gloves (one pair per participant) • 4- by 4-inch dressings (one for each participant) • One triangular bandage per participant • Splinting material (e.g., cardboard, magazines, pieces of lath, pillows, towels) • Note cards • Duct tape
5	<p>Disaster Psychology</p>
6	<p>Fire Safety and Utility Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One mannequin (optional) • 1-liter bottle • Tourniquet if available (preferably one for every two students)

Unit 1	Equipment/Supply Checklist
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-latex examination gloves (one pair per participant) • 4- by 4-inch dressings (one for each participant) • One triangular bandage per participant • Splinting material (e.g., cardboard, magazines, pieces of lath, pillows, towels) • Note cards • Duct tape
7	<p>Light Search and Rescue Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One mannequin (optional) • 1-liter bottle • Tourniquet if available (preferably one for every two students) • Non-latex examination gloves (one pair per participant) • 4- by 4-inch dressings (one for each participant) • One triangular bandage per participant • Splinting material (e.g., cardboard, magazines, pieces of lath, pillows, towels) • Note cards • Duct tape
8	Terrorism and CERT
9	Course Review, Final Exam, and Disaster Simulation

Evaluation Plan

There are three primary methods for evaluation during the delivery of this course.

1. Instructors will conduct learning assessment throughout the course delivery through checks for learning and understanding, discussion questions, and opportunities for feedback.
2. Students will demonstrate their proficiency in applying knowledge and/or skills learned by completing a multiple-choice test. A proficiency of 75 percent is required to pass this course. There will also be an opportunity for individual evaluation during the course activities and exercises to determine whether individual students demonstrate proficiency in the required functions.
3. Course providers will use an evaluation form to document participant feedback on overall quality of content, instruction, and facilities. The evaluation uses a 1–5 rating system, with five being the highest. At the conclusion of the course, the course provider will collect the evaluations and return them to the course manager for review.