

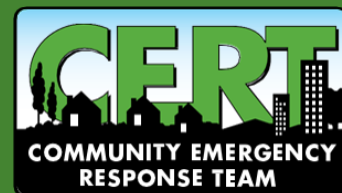


CERT Basic Training

Participant Manual



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 OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

The CERT Basic Training provides individuals who complete this course with the basic skills required to respond to their community's immediate needs in the aftermath of a disaster, when emergency services are not immediately available. By working together, CERT volunteers can help save lives and protect property using the basic techniques in this course. The target audience for this course is individuals who desire the skills and knowledge required to prepare for and respond to a disaster.

Overall Course Objectives

Upon completing this course, the participants should be able to:

1. Take steps to prepare themselves, their families, and their communities for a disaster;
2. Describe the function and organization of a CERT program and the role CERTs serve in immediate disaster response;
3. Recognize life-threatening conditions and apply appropriate life-saving techniques, conduct patient head-to-toe assessments, employ basic treatment for injuries, and understand disaster medical operations;
4. Describe the post-disaster emotional environment and the steps that volunteers can take to relieve their own stressors and those of disaster survivors;
5. Identify and reduce potential fire hazards in their homes, workplaces, and neighborhoods and perform basic fire suppression strategies, resources, and safety measures;
6. Describe the most common techniques associated with light search and rescue operations including identifying planning and size-up requirements, searching a structure, debris removal, survivor extrication, and rescuer safety; and
7. Explain current terrorism trends and measures CERT volunteers can take to increase preparedness before and safety during a terrorism incident.

In addition to the overall course objectives listed above, each unit has specific objectives.

COURSE AGENDA

The agenda for this course is outlined below. 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.

Unit	Topics
1	Disaster Preparedness <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	CERT Organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit Overview • CERT Organization • CERT Mobilization • Documentation • Unit Summary
3	Disaster Medical Operations — Part 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit Overview • Treating Life – Threatening Conditions • Basic First Aid Care • Unit Summary
4	Disaster Medical Operations — Part 2 <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	Disaster Psychology <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, you will receive a certificate. Your community may also provide additional documents that will identify you as an emergency response team volunteer during disaster response.

In addition, you should maintain your 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. You should reinforce your skills through follow-up training and repeated practice to maintain the skills necessary for effective response to a disaster.

To maintain your skill level and continually improve performance, you and your team should participate in continuing 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.