

Lesson 1:

CERT Overview: Introduction

In this lesson, you will learn what a CERT is, the origin of the national CERT program, examples of local CERT volunteer organizations, and the general and national purpose of CERT.

At the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- Define and describe CERT Program.
- Identify ways a CERT helps national resilience.

This lesson should take you about **45** minutes to complete.

CERT in Action

CERT training gives you the skills and confidence to survive and to help others in a disaster or hazardous situation.

Community Emergency Response Team members from California, Florida, and Texas explain how they come together to prepare their communities and assist their neighbors during emergencies.

CERT IN ACTION Video Transcript:

00:01
♪
00:03
GAIL: It was a warm, beautiful day,
00:06
and the excitement in the air was the battle of the bay
00:10
between the two baseball teams, the Giants and the A's.
00:15
My family was sitting down to dinner,
00:16
with the television on, to watch the World Series game,
00:19
and then the earthquake started.
00:21
The television blacked out, there was noise everywhere.
00:24
All of a sudden the ground was shaking,
00:26
the walls were shaking.
00:28
It's like being on an ocean liner
00:30
that's hit a huge wave or a storm at sea.
00:34
REPORTERS: We have had a very major earthquake.
00:36

The fire in Oakland is a major fire, large fire,

00:38

nearly half a block long.

00:39

An entire section of the Bay Bridge has been lost.

00:42

[static]

00:44

GAIL: It was the scariest thing I'd ever been through.

00:47

And I think the worst thing about it

00:48

was not knowing what to do after.

00:53

ERICA: In 1989 when Loma Prieta earthquake hit,

00:57

our department went to Los Angeles

00:59

to get the CERT curriculum.

01:02

The Community Emergency Response Team program.

01:05

Our primary goal is to make sure

01:07

that the residents that live here are ready for anything.

01:10

♪

01:17

♪

01:22

RANCE: Mart is a small town.

01:25

There's only about 2,000 people that live here.

01:27

So what's unique about the CERT program here at Mart

01:29

is a number of things.

01:30

One, it's all teenagers.

01:32

All of us are in high school.

01:33

It's also taught as an actual class here.

01:35

It affects our GPA.

01:37

The Teen CERT program is crucial to Mart,

01:40

because we don't have EMS,

01:42

we don't have those types of first responders.

01:44

Waco would be called first,

01:46

and it takes them at least 30 minutes to get here.

01:49

So, we really are the first line of defense.

01:53

BUFFY: So we are going to be looking at MIs. What are MIs?

01:57

CLASS: Heart attacks. BUFFY: Heart attacks.

01:59

BUFFY: As the town's needs change, our studies change.

02:02

Our community needs not just a CERT curriculum,

02:05

but we add to that with the EMT curriculum.

02:10

I don't think adults give teenagers in general

02:13

enough credit for what they can and can't do.

02:17

We kind of undermine what I think they're capable of,

02:19

so if you teach them to rise to that expectation, they will,

02:24

and they'll be able to handle it.

02:26

Marlin is in Falls County, 20, 30 minutes away.

02:29

The water system completely failed last year,

02:32

so the townspeople were without water

02:34

for approximately ten to twelve days.

02:37

RANCE: We kind of just immediately jumped into action

02:38

and knew exactly what to do.

02:40

BUFFY: The thing that they did the most was console people.

02:43

It was very traumatic for the whole community.

02:47

So to be there to give assistance

02:49

really helped us feel like we were making a difference

02:52

with some people.

02:53

RANCE: We've been prepared so well

02:54

that whenever we're put into these situations,

02:56

we don't think about can I do this,

02:58

we do it because we've had the training

02:59

and we know that we can.

03:01



03:06

HEATHER: We teach people confidence.

03:09

The confidence that should a situation arise

03:11

that you have the capabilities to react to that situation.

03:16

So one of the scenarios that we have

03:18

is what to do in the event

03:19

of either being in a submerged vehicle

03:22

or coming upon one.

03:23

MAN: The right leg.

03:25

HEATHER: Alright, go ahead and get her out

03:26

and then tend to her over there on the side of the road.

03:28

DOLORES: I can't do it.

03:29

MAN: That's okay, we'll carry you.

03:31

MAN: What's your name, ma'am?

03:32

WOMAN: Can you tell us your name?

03:33

DOLORES: My names is Dolores Bertolini.

03:35

[phone rings]

03:36

DOLORES: CERT for me meant, uh, survival

03:39

and how to survive in the wilderness,

03:42

because at that time I thought this was wilderness.

03:45

We were big city kids from New York City,

03:48

so we never even thought about hurricanes.

03:51

It's just beautiful here. All the time.

03:54

But when a storm comes, everything changes.

03:58

HEATHER: Our CERT members played a huge role

04:00

in Hurricane Matthew.

04:02

We were a part of opening a shelter here in our region,

04:06

and our CERT members were the ones

04:08

that came to the rescue, once again,

04:10

and, uh, manned that shelter.

04:12

They made sure that everybody had what they needed.

04:15

We could not react as an emergency management division

04:19

without them.

04:20

They are that integral of a role.

04:24

DOLORES: Everybody can be a CERT member.

04:26

Everybody brings a skill.

04:28

That's the type of city we have.

04:30

♪

04:33

HASHIM: So the next earthquake,

04:35

we know it's going to happen within 30 years,

04:36

we know we're going to get a big one,

04:38

we have no idea when it's going to occur,

04:40

but we have to be ready.

04:43

ERICA: We've had a lot of people

04:44

that, um, felt like they needed to do something

04:48

after the earthquake.

04:50

Today the CERT program is stronger than ever.

04:53

CAROLINA: We care about our community,

04:55

so we sign up and show up.

04:57

This is my first citywide drill

04:59

where I get to apply the skills I've learned.

05:02

HASHIM: We assess the building from outside

05:04

to see what we notice.

05:06

CAROLINA: You're always assessing your situation

05:08

to make sure that you react quickly and proactively.

05:12

I've also learned many different skills,
05:14
like being able to assess structural damage in a building,
05:17
look for gas leaks and do a little bit of triage.
05:21
HASHIM: Our job here is to train our CERT volunteers
05:23
to be on their own for at least three or four days.
05:26
We're so used to calling on resources
05:29
that are readily available to us,
05:30
and during the time of an earthquake,
05:32
those resources just aren't gonna come,
05:34
so you really have to rely on your neighbors
05:35
and the people that are around you.
05:37
♪
05:40
GAIL: I am not afraid anymore.
05:42
If another earthquake happens, or another disaster,
05:45
I, I have some skills that I have learned,
05:48
and so the fear and the terror is not there.
05:52
RANCE: It's really empowering to know
05:53
that you're what's gonna be there first.
05:55
You're what's gonna comfort the people.
05:57
DOLORES: Because of the CERT training,
05:59
we didn't lose hope.
06:01
We actually became proponents of you can survive no matter what.
06:06
CAROLINA: I think what I like best about the program
06:09
is just feeling like I am part of San Francisco,
06:12
and in case of an emergency, I feel prepared.
06:15
♪

What is the CERT Program?

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program educates community volunteers about disaster preparedness for the hazards that may affect their area. The program also trains volunteers in basic disaster response skills.

- Fire safety
- Light search and rescue
- Team organization, and
- Disaster medical operations

The CERT program offers a consistent, nationwide approach to volunteer training and organization. With trained, reliable volunteer teams in place, professional responders can focus on more complex and dangerous tasks during disaster situations. CERT volunteers build and enhance capabilities to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.

What Exactly is a CERT?

A Community Emergency Response Team, or CERT, is an organized group of volunteers trained in a consistent, nationwide approach to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. CERT volunteers support emergency responders with disaster preparedness and with protecting family, neighbors, and others in a disaster or emergency situation.

Note: As a group, CERT volunteers only deploy how and when directed by their sponsoring organization. However, CERT training prepares individuals how to act as good Samaritans and apply their skills when situations arise in their daily lives.

CERT: The Origin Story

The CERT concept was developed by the Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD). In 1985, LAFD officials traveled to Japan to study their disaster response plans. They learned that Japan used extensive training programs to train neighborhoods in basic emergency skills: light search and rescue, fire suppression, first aid, and evacuation.

Later that year, a violent 8.1 earthquake hit Mexico City and killed thousands of people. A LAFD group traveled to Mexico City and observed how untrained neighbors were often first to respond to those trapped and injured nearby.

Soon the L.A. City Fire Department began training their neighborhood watch leaders to perform basic fire suppression, light search and rescue, and first aid. This first team of 30 people completed training in early 1986. Using drills, demonstrations, and exercises, they proved that using layperson emergency responders was a viable concept.

In 1987, the 5.9-magnitude Whittier Narrows earthquake just 12 miles east of L.A. proved to officials of the need for training civilians to better aid others and meet immediate needs.

After the earthquake, L.A. created the Disaster Preparedness Unit within the Fire Department. Their goals were to:

- Educate and train the public and government sectors in disaster preparedness.
- Research, evaluate, and publicize disaster information.
- Develop, train, and maintain a network of Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs).

CERT Goes National

FEMA made the CERT training available nationally in 1993. Now communities in all 50 states, including many tribal nations and U.S. territories conduct CERT training for teens and adults for all kinds of hazards. FEMA supports CERTs by conducting or sponsoring Train-the-Trainer and Program Manager courses for members of the fire, medical, and emergency management community.

CERTs Assist Communities, Professional Responders

Using the training learned in the classroom and during exercises, CERT volunteers can assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event when emergency responders are not immediately available to help. CERT volunteers often run shelters, provide basic first aid, shut off utilities, and mark unsafe areas.

CERT volunteers also are encouraged to support emergency response agencies by taking a more active role in emergency preparedness projects in their community. Preparedness projects include installing smoke alarms, distributing safety information, and participating in large-scale community emergency response exercises.

Some communities, such as Washington, DC, use CERT volunteers to help staff and manage planned special events.

Common Training for Varying Needs

The CERT Program trains volunteers to prepare for the types of disasters that their community may face. Through hands-on practice and realistic exercises, CERT volunteers:

- Learn how to safely respond to [man-made, technological, and natural hazards](#).
- Help organize basic disaster response.
- Promote preparedness by hosting and participating in community events.

Creating a CERT

A CERT is organized by a sponsoring local government agency, usually a fire department, police department, or emergency management agency. The sponsoring organization finds or liaises with the volunteers, provides and supervises the training, and has the authority to deploy CERTs.

Each Community Tailors Its CERT

The CERT program is specifically structured so that the local and state program managers have the flexibility to form their programs in the way that best suits their communities. CERT volunteers are trained to respond safely, responsibly, and effectively to emergency situations most likely to occur in their community. For example, CERT training in Vermont might include snow rescues, treating hypothermia, and snow mobile use, while a coastal South Carolina community will likely include hurricane preparedness.

CERT volunteers can also support their communities during [non-emergency events](#) as well.

Not all CERTs Look Alike

There are over 2,700 local CERT programs nationwide, with more than 600,000 individuals trained since CERT became a national program. CERT volunteer organizations exist nationwide, including in the U.S. territories, in a variety of environments, and with many thousands of individuals trained since CERT became a national program. Additionally, many individual citizens complete CERT training for their own personal individual preparedness.

Select each of the kinds of trained CERT groups below to learn more.

- [Communities](#) (such as neighborhoods, towns—these are the most common CERTs)

- [Workplaces](#)
- [Teen groups](#) (such as high school groups, Scouting groups)
- [Campus](#)

Community CERTs

Following a disaster, community members may be on their own for a period of time because of the size of the area affected, lost communications, impassable roads, or the sheer demand for services placed on an area's fire, EMS, and law enforcement agencies.

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program supports local response capability by training volunteers to organize themselves and spontaneous volunteers at the disaster site, to provide immediate assistance to victims, and to collect disaster intelligence to support responders' efforts when they arrive.

Throughout the nation, cities, counties, and towns sponsor CERTs for their communities to be better prepared for all kinds of emergencies. The most typical CERTs are organized by localities. However, CERT volunteers within a community might organize within a wide variety of community organizations.

Some examples of community groups that have CERTs include:

- Cities, towns, localities
- Neighborhood Watch groups
- Homeowners associations
- Amateur radio/Ham radio clubs
- Rotary clubs
- Snowmobile clubs
- Boating clubs
- Four-wheel drive clubs
- Church groups
- Festival organizers

Resources:

- [How to Start a CERT Guide](#)
- [How to Set Up a Community Emergency Response Team](#)

Workplace CERTs

Workplace CERT volunteers are trained using the CERT Basic Training curriculum. Having trained volunteers available on staff helps protect the health, safety, and lives of people at the workplace. A Workplace CERT program equips employees with skills that enable them to perform basic disaster response operations in an emergency. CERT training will ensure employees have the knowledge and skills to act quickly.

Workplace CERT programs:

- Equip employees with skills that enable them to perform basic disaster response operations in an emergency.
- Can increase workplace resilience by increasing personal preparedness, allowing employees to return to work more quickly after a disaster.
- Can help serve the public in the event of an emergency.
- CERT training will ensure employees have the knowledge and skills to act quickly.
- Can support the nonemergency needs of the workplace, such as help manage traffic and crowds at large events and functions.
- Might support CERT activities elsewhere in the community at the invitation of a local government emergency response organization, or per the terms of a formal agreement between the business or

organization that oversees the Workplace CERT program and a local government emergency response organization.

Note: While CERT volunteers learn a variety of skills, they are not professional responders and should not act beyond their training.

FEMA does offer support materials for establishing a Workplace CERT.



CERT training ensures employees have the knowledge and skills to act quickly.

Resource:

- [Workplace CERT Starter Guide](#)

Teen CERT

Teen CERT aims to train students in emergency preparedness and basic response to ensure that they have the skills needed to protect themselves and assist others in the event of an emergency.

Teen CERTs can support a school's emergency operations plan and assist emergency services personnel, thus providing valuable surge capacity to local first responders when needed. In addition, students are likely to take home lessons learned in the classroom, spreading the preparedness message to their families.

Teen CERTs might consist of Boy Scouts and/or Girl Scouts, members of a high school community service club, or students taking an emergency preparedness class.

FEMA offers support materials for establishing a Teen CERT, such as *Teen CERT: Launching and Maintaining the Training*.

Resources:

- [Ready.gov Teen CERT page](#)
- [CERT Train-the-Trainer Course Instructor Guide](#)
- [Making a Difference with Teen CERT](#)
- [Teen CERT: Launching and Maintaining the Training](#)

Campus CERTS

Some universities have a campus CERT as part of their emergency management program. A campus CERT generally focuses on campus emergency situations but may choose or be asked to participate in assisting their greater community depending upon their organization.

FEMA offers a selection of resources for implementing a Campus CERT.

- [Campus CERT Starter Guide](#)
- [Community Emergency Response Team \(CERT\) Training Materials](#)

Individual Preparedness

By completing CERT Basic training, individuals become prepared to respond safely, responsibly, and effectively to emergency situations and are better able to care for themselves and those around them in such situations. Thus, CERT training is useful for everyone.

Sometimes a locality might not manage a CERT group, but it may instead offer CERT Basic training to individuals to bolster the preparedness of its citizenry.

Sometimes citizens participate in a sponsored CERT Basic course to increase their own preparedness but elect not to join an organized CERT group. In 2015, the Emergency Management division of the Shawnee, Kansas, Fire Department hosted two CERT Basic courses. That year they taught approximately 40 citizens how to prepare their families and neighborhoods for emergencies and recruited an additional 30 people to be part of Shawnee CERT.

CERTs Support National Preparedness

The CERT Program supports the National Preparedness Goal and supports FEMA's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan goals. The program fits well with the strategic directive to "encourage action beyond awareness, thereby laying the foundation of a culture of preparedness upon which individuals, families, and communities can build." Every community—households, neighborhoods, private and public sectors, faith-based organizations, and all levels of government (local, regional/metropolitan, state, tribal, territorial—can benefit from and implement a CERT Program.

The National Preparedness Goal:

A secure and resilient Nation with the capabilities required across the whole community to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk.

([National Preparedness Goal, 2nd ed., Sept. 2015](#))

FEMA's 2018-2022 Strategic plan:

"FEMA's preparedness messaging must encourage action beyond awareness, thereby laying the foundation of a culture of preparedness upon which individuals, families, and communities can build."

Objective 1.3 Help People Prepare for Disasters – Performance Measures

- Increase the percentage of people with savings set aside for an emergency.
- Deliver training to community-based and non-profit organizations to help them continue service delivery following disasters.
- Increase the percentage of people who have taken preparedness actions.

CERT and NIMS: A Nationwide Approach

In the field of emergency management, there is an effort to standardize equipment, organizational structures, and terminology to create better response and preparedness across the country at every level of government. The National Incident Management System (NIMS) is a FEMA doctrine that provides a common, nationwide approach to enable the whole community to work together to manage all threats and hazards. NIMS applies to all incidents, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity.

CERT training conforms to the NIMS standards and structure. No matter the location or incident, CERT volunteers and professional emergency management personnel use the same terminology, use consistent organizational structures, use standard equipment, and follow standard procedures.

Case Studies

Check out these various active CERTs from around the United States.

Jacksonville CERT, Oregon

The Jacksonville CERT, Oregon, works under the supervision of the Jacksonville Fire Department. The Jacksonville CERT has provided support for “structure fires requiring extended firefighting, flood control activities with the Public Works department, Jackson County Sheriff’s Department use of the hotline for missing persons, Jackson County Search and Rescue in locating missing persons, Oregon Department of Forestry administration needs during forest fires, City events requiring safety and traffic personnel, Community Education events sponsored by the Fire Department, ODF, and Jackson County Emergency Services.” The CERT has several licensed amateur radio operators and also maintains a response vehicle.

Newsarticle: [Jacksonville CERT, Jacksonville Review Online](#)

Rough Rider Snowmobile Club

Members of the Rough Rider Snowmobile Club of Bismarck, North Dakota, have applied their CERT skills to help those in need in several emergency situations. In January 2019, this CERT provided aid during an emergency plane landing. In a December 2016 blizzard, the CERT assisted the Burleigh County Sheriff’s Department to transport medical personnel and deliver direly needed insulin to a man in need. The Rough Rider Snowmobile Club is well equipped to quickly get to the scene for winter emergencies and are trained in a number of life-saving techniques.

NAPA Valley CERT

In Napa Valley, the CERT volunteers use ham radio technology to keep abreast of injury and body counts, supply needs, and communicate with the incident command center. The CERT volunteers have manned shelters, rescued animals, and set up donation centers when responding to wildfires.

Learn more about CERT successes:

[Caught in a Disaster? Your Rescuer Might be an Amateur](#)

Success Stories

CERTs throughout the nation have had positive effects on their communities.

Select each news article to learn about specific CERT successes.

- [WCU-Dallas CERT Provides Emergency Relief during Hurricane Harvey](#)
- [Rough Rider Snowmobile Club Comes to the Rescue During Winter Storm](#)
- [Ham Radio use: Keeping Lines of Communication Open—CERT & Ham Radio](#)
- [Teen Leader Preps Local CERT practices for Tornado Safety](#)
- [Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency “Rounds Up” CERTs for a Rodeo](#)

Lesson 1:

CERT Overview: Lesson Summary

This lesson provided an overview about what a CERT is, the origin of the national CERT program, examples of local CERT volunteer organizations, and the general and national purpose of CERT.

You should now be able to:

- Define and describe CERT Program.
- Identify ways a CERT helps national resilience.

Key points covered in this lesson include:

- The Los Angeles Fire Department developed the CERT concept started in 1985 when they realized emergency responders needed assistance to aid people during a major disaster.
- A CERT is an organized group of volunteers trained in a consistent, nationwide approach to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.
- CERTs support the National Preparedness Goal.
- CERT volunteer organizations are formed in many environments: teen, workplace, campus, clubs—but all have a sponsoring organization, such as a fire department or emergency management agency.
- The sponsoring organization determines how and when to deploy CERT volunteers.

Lesson 2: What CERTs Do: Introduction

In this lesson, you will learn about CERT roles and responsibilities, how CERTs work with formal emergency response organizations, how CERTs integrate into an Incident Command System (ICS) structure, and what CERTs do and do not do. You will also learn about case study examples of how CERT programs are helping various communities.

At the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- Identify ways CERT volunteers can help their community.
- List CERT volunteer roles and responsibilities.

This lesson should take you about **40** minutes to complete.

Ways CERTs Assist the Community

CERT programs are valuable community assets because they:

- Augment the resources of professional responders
- Serve as a community resource
- Mitigate hazards before and during a disaster or emergency
- Respond to disasters

CERTs Augment Professional Response Resources

As a CERT volunteer, you can provide valuable assistance by addressing needs that may arise before emergency responders can arrive in your neighborhood or workplace.

After emergency responders arrive and become involved in high-priority needs regarding public safety, major fire suppression, or mass casualties, CERT volunteers can assist with supporting activities, such as crowd control, traffic control, and distributing supplies, food, and water.

CERTs: Community Resource

CERTs are not restricted to disaster-response activities. CERT volunteers have the potential to become a known and trusted resource in their communities. As a CERT volunteer, you can support emergency response agencies with nonemergency projects in many ways. For instance, you can help with community safety projects or help neighbors and co-workers prepare for emergencies.

- Identify and aid community members who may need help during a disaster.
 - Verify and update a list of special needs residents who have previously registered with local emergency responders.
 - Provide lists and advice regarding evacuation kits.
 - Conduct basic home safety checks.
- Visit and speak to groups (e.g., community centers, homeowners associations) regarding preparedness.
- Staff parades, festivals, fairs, and other events to distribute information or staff a first aid station or lost child area.
- Direct runners during a marathon.
- Guide traffic and pedestrians away from the routes of bike races, marathons, and parades.

CERTs: Your Own Community Resource

Remember, every CERT's mission and duties are determined by its sponsoring organization and its locality's needs. Volunteers can seek more information about CERT activities and advanced training opportunities from the local CERT program manager or sponsoring organization.

CERTs and Hazard Mitigation and Preparation

Hazard [mitigation](#) planning is the basis of community resilience. The CERT in conjunction with emergency response services is part of a locality's hazard mitigation to reduce future risk and impact of a disaster. Thus, CERTs are involved in both hazard preparation and hazard response activities.

Hazard preparation begins with reducing hazards in the home or workplace before a disaster occurs. Then, you act immediately after an event to minimize damage and risk.

Examples of CERT preparation activities include:

- Eliminating unnecessary hazardous materials from your home.
- Ensuring that none of your electrical outlets are overloaded.
- Shutting off gas meters that are leaking after an event.
- Boarding up windows.
- Sandbagging to prevent/reduce flooding.

Disaster Response and CERTs

Based on your local CERT Program's operating procedures, you may respond in your area following a disaster. CERT volunteers are trained to provide help when professional responders are delayed. Once professional responders arrive, you may be asked to assist them with critical support activities.

CERT training is critical to your response.

With appropriate disaster response training, during a disaster situation CERT volunteers may be:

- Locating and turning off utilities when it is safe to do so
- Extinguishing small fires safely
- Treating life-threatening injuries until more highly trained medical assistance can be obtained

- Conducting light search and rescue operations
- Helping survivors cope with trauma

You'll learn more about these response activities in the hands-on CERT Basic Training class.

CERT: Past Participation in Disasters and Emergencies (Success Stories)

Trained CERT volunteers have participated in many emergency and nonemergency situations.

- The Humble Area CERT in Humble, Texas, [staffed a temporary shelter post Hurricane Harvey](#) in 2017.
- In December 2019, several CERTs (collectively known as Rural Region A CERT) in Bates County, Missouri, [participated in a missing person search](#).
- The Newport Beach CERT, one of 480 CERT programs in California called to assist, [participated in the cleanup of the catastrophic wildfire](#) in Paradise, California, in March 2019.
- The Atlanta CERT volunteered at the 2019 Atlanta Mayor's 5K.
- In May 2018 nearly 100 CERT volunteers participated in the City of Yacaipa's countywide CERT training exercise under the guidance of San Bernadino's Fire Office of Emergency Services.

Remember that CERT needs and training vary from locality to locality, and your participation will vary based upon training.

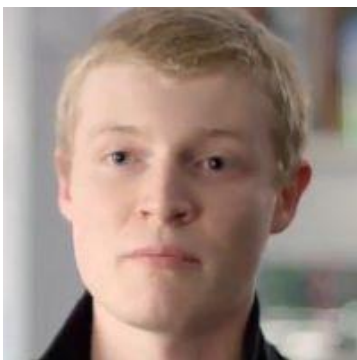
CERTs Make a Difference

As a CERT volunteer, you can provide valuable assistance by addressing the needs that may arise before emergency responders can arrive in your neighborhood or workplace. How do actual CERT volunteers feel about their role in the community?



Gail:

"I am not afraid anymore. If another earthquake happens, or another disaster, I have some skills that I have learned, so the fear and the terror is not there."



Rance:

"It's really empowering to know that you're what's gonna be there first."



Delores:

"Because of CERT training, we didn't lose hope. We actually became the proponents of you can survive no matter what."



Carolina:

"What I like best about the program is just feeling like I am part of San Francisco, and in case of an emergency, I feel prepared."

CERT Roles and Responsibilities

The national training curriculum provided in the CERT Basic course gives volunteers emergency preparedness and emergency response skills to safely care for family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers before professional responders arrive.

So far, we've looked at some common CERT roles: community resource, hazard mitigation, and disaster response. Where will you fit in?

Where Will You Fit?

You will have the chance to perform a number of different jobs as a CERT volunteer. CERT offers opportunities for you to build on skills you already have or find something completely new to contribute to your team. Let's see what three CERT volunteers have to say about how they fit into their CERT organization.

- [Sandy Bastille](#)
- [Sara Trimble](#)
- [John Clark](#)

Next, let's look at individual CERT volunteer roles and how a CERT operates.

Sandy Bastille

A sudden thunderstorm in our community brought high winds, along with bigger than usual waves that washed over the shore causing flooding on our streets and sidewalks. The water pouring onto the streets and sidewalks was just phenomenal. People were scurrying around trying to get out of the way of the water. The first responders responded quickly, then CERT members were activated and they stepped right in. They proactively coordinated the people in the streets, ensuring that everyone in the community was accounted for and safe. The first responders set up barricades and CERTs were asked to direct everyone away from the flooding to higher ground since those areas weren't inundated with water. The public works department set about their work and, because of the safety zones that were set up around the barricades, they were able to move their

equipment safely without fear of anyone being in their way. The barricades allowed us to quickly identify what the actual danger spots were and make sure that people kept clear of those areas.

Sara Trimble

I've gotten into the disaster programs within the hospitals, both the one I work at and the one that's close by, and helping their disaster committees come up with plans, what to do should there be disasters, as well as providing communications support via the ham frequencies.

John Clark

There are multiple roles in CERT, and in our group we've all kind of gravitated to our specialty. I'm an outdoor person, so I like to be outdoors. I kind of gravitate more toward the urban search and rescue, being out in the front line, checking things out and providing information back to our CERT director.

CERT Organization in a Disaster

The government agency that sponsors your local CERT Program will establish local protocols for CERT activation and operations. These local protocols will be based on the [Incident Command System \(ICS\)](#). When working in their neighborhood or workplace, team members will use ICS to manage CERT activities.

As a CERT volunteer, you first respond to a disaster by reporting to your neighborhood or workplace staging area with your supplies. Along the way, record the locations and types of damage you see. You'll use this information to establish priorities and make decisions about if and how the team will respond.

CERT Task-related Teams

CERT volunteers may operate as a single team that performs all activities as required, but CERT volunteers may also be assigned to smaller task-related teams. Teams will be assigned based on incident needs. Typical team assignments include:

- CERT Team Leader
- Safety Officer
- Fire Suppression Team
- Search and Rescue Team
- Medical Treatment Team

Team Makeup

Each volunteer team must have at least three members and a designated leader.

The designated Team Leader (TL) is responsible for ensuring team safety, communicating with the CERT volunteers, and carrying out the assigned tasks. Small groups of CERT volunteers become a "buddy team" and respond to incidents/tasks as directed. Another volunteer serves as a runner and relays messages between the task team and TL and between the TL and designated emergency responder at the Incident Command Post (ICP).

Reminder: For safety reasons, volunteers do not work alone. Remember the "T" in CERT stands for "team"!

The CERT Team Leader

The first CERT volunteer to arrive becomes the TL. The TL will begin managing operations until the designated CERT TL arrives.

Once the TL arrives at the staging area, the TL will assume the responsibilities for managing CERT operations. Let's say you are the TL. What are your duties?

First, make your ICS position assignments. Then prioritize the CERT response to the incident so that you can do the most good for the most people.

Then you should ensure that information is continually gathered about injuries and damage. Make sure you document these findings and all other team operations.

And don't forget to communicate these findings and coordinate with emergency responders. You will continue to manage operations until you are relieved by a trained emergency responder on the scene.

Benefits of the CERT Structure

An organizational structure helps CERT leaders and members to be more effective and focused in their response. An accountability system and management structure help ensure the safety of the team. Organization also makes communication, information management, and activity documentation more effective.

The result of a structured approach is what matters the most: the ability to direct team responses to do the most good for the most people in the shortest amount of time.

Remember, the government agency that sponsors your local CERT Program establishes other important protocols that all local CERTs must follow. You'll learn about these protocols in the classroom *CERT Basic Training* course.

Your CERT Responsibilities

In brief, each CERT volunteer has some basic responsibilities:

- Personal and home safety
- Two-way communications with your CERT
- Reliable, current information
- Documentation of events, decisions

When Your CERT Mobilizes

When an incident occurs, you should first take care of matters close to home. This includes handling any concerns related to:

- Yourself
- Your family
- Your home
- Your immediate neighbors
- Your CERT

You will not be able to function effectively as a CERT volunteer before handling these concerns. Once you have resolved matters in your immediate area, you should function according to your team's standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Communication

Two-way communication between the CERT Team Leader and CERT teams operating in the field is vital.

Situations and priorities may change rapidly during a response. The CERT Team Leader must be aware of these changes and communicate changing information to members in the field. Doing so helps to ensure that CERT volunteers act safely and do the greatest good for the greatest number in the shortest amount of time.

Two-way communication also plays an important role in decision-making.

CERT Decision-Making

Good decisions depend on reliable and current information. An open line of communication between the CERT Team Leader and individual CERT volunteers in the field ensures that they all have the most recent information about disaster events. This information then allows CERTs to make decisions and tailor their response to the changing situation efficiently and safely.

And because team safety is always the first priority, all decisions will be made with one key question in mind:

Is it safe for me to attempt this task?

CERT Documentation

Mobilization and decision-making require documentation. You can play a role in incident documentation and maintain an efficient flow of information for your team. Documentation has many uses. It's a good way to account for team members and deploy them where they will do the most good. Once on the scene, they can document damages and track injuries.

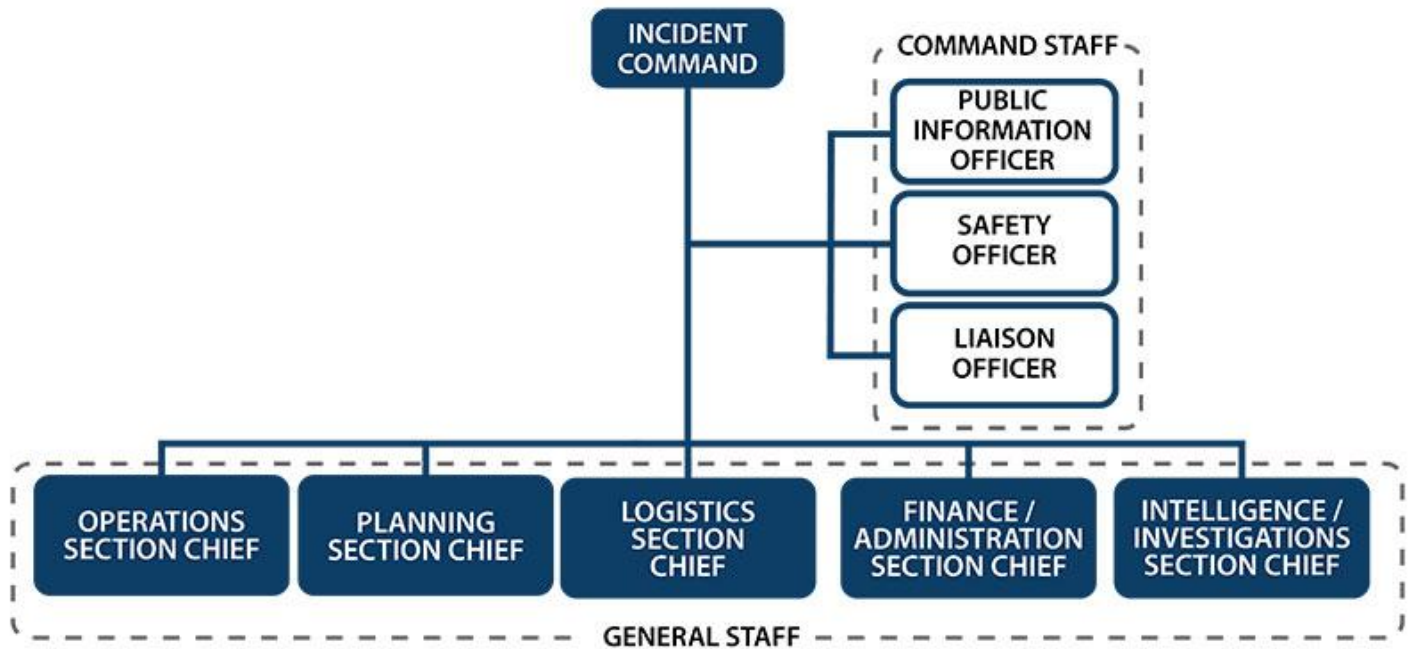
Writing down the details of the situation can also help you develop an understanding of the overall situation. This can be especially helpful when professional responders arrive on the scene. Be prepared to provide them with your assembled documentation as soon as they arrive.

Standard forms are available for many types of CERT documentation. You will learn more about documentation and using the forms in the CERT classroom training.

Organization is Based on the Incident Command System

Emergency responders use the Incident Command System (ICS) organization dictated by NIMS to help organize and manage incidents. CERTs use the same organization strategy. Using ICS for every incident helps hone and maintain skills as well as provides defined roles for CERT volunteers and professional responder alike. ICS helps to effectively coordinate efforts. The graphic below shows the structure and roles found in an ICS chart.

ICS Command Function Organization Chart



Org Chart for Incident Command

Org Chart: Incident Command. Under that - Operations Section Chief, Planning Section Chief, Logistics Section Chief, Finance/Administration Section Chief, Intelligence/Investigations Section Chief, Command Staff. Under Command Staff: Public Information Officer, Safety Officer, Liaison Officer.

ICS Structure and CERT Roles

Each position in the ICS covers a specific function. The chart below depicts how CERT personnel are assigned to similar functional roles as professional responders in the ICS.

Emergency Responder	Role	CERT Volunteer
Incident Commander (IC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader • Decides what is to be done • Emergency responder (not a CERT role) 	Team Leader (TL)
Operations Section Chief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doer • Implements the decisions made by the IC/TL and performs actions 	Operations
Logistics Section Chief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getter • Ensures that the personnel, equipment, and tools required by operations to implement the IC's/TL's decisions are in the right place, at the right time, in the right quantities 	Logistics
Planning Section Chief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinker; anticipates required personnel, materials, and tasks 	Planning

What about Liability?

Minimizing risk—to both the public and to CERT volunteers—minimizes [liability](#). SOPs and rules of conduct minimize liability by instructing CERT leaders and members how to carry out their responsibilities.

Consistent application of SOPs and rules of conduct for volunteers creates a safer work environment, outlines clear responsibilities, and helps workers benefit from injury and liability protection, and minimizes risks to all.

To learn more about minimizing risk and managing liability, as well as ways CERT programs can overcome the fear of liability barrier, refer to the [Community Emergency Response Team \(CERT\) Liability Guide](#). This guide is useful to local CERT programs, their sponsoring government agencies and legal advisors, and CERT volunteers.

Good Samaritan Laws

Every state offers some form of Good Samaritan protection, but the scope of protection varies greatly. A “Good Samaritan law” is the popular name for statutes that provide limited immunity to individuals who, in good faith, without a duty, and without compensation, help a person who is experiencing a health emergency in a setting where there is no ready access to professional care.

Good Samaritan laws provide liability protection specifically to volunteers who assist in emergencies. Protection varies and follows specific criteria set forth in the state’s statute. Check with an attorney to determine what protection is available under your state’s law.

Know Your Limitations

The national training curriculum provided in the CERT Basic course gives volunteers emergency preparedness and emergency response skills to safely care for family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers before professional responders arrive.

Safety is paramount. Volunteers should never operate beyond the limitations of their training! The consequences to yourself or others could be severe injury or death.

Lesson 2: What CERTs Do: Lesson Summary

This lesson discussed how CERTs operate, the roles people play within CERT and their responsibilities, and introduced how CERT relates to ICS. You should now be able to:

- Identify ways CERT volunteers can help their community.
- List CERT volunteer roles and responsibilities.

Key points covered in this lesson include:

- CERTs can extend the capabilities of response organizations through hazard mitigation and response activities.
- Before a disaster, CERTs focus on emergency preparedness and hazard mitigation.
- After a disaster, CERTs may operate directly or assist responders in activities to save or sustain lives and protect property.
- CERTs are organized according to the Incident Command System.
- No matter the location or incident, CERT volunteers and formally trained emergency responders and managers use the same terminology, use consistent organizational structures, use standard equipment, and follow standard procedures.

- Volunteers are responsible for maintaining consistent two-way communications with the CERT; reliable, current information; and documentation of events and decisions.
- Safety first! Volunteers should never operate beyond the limitations of their training!

Lesson 3: Becoming Involved: Introduction

In this lesson, you will learn about how to become involved with a CERT Program, what the benefits of being a CERT volunteer are, what groups you may be working with, and CERT training requirements.

At the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- Identify benefits of being a CERT volunteer.
- List components of the CERT training program.

This lesson should take you about **20** minutes to complete.

Why People Join CERT

CERT volunteers come from neighborhoods, workplaces, or other community organizations. Members join because they want to learn how to better prepare for hazards that threaten their homes and communities. They want to protect their families, themselves, and their communities.

As a CERT volunteer, you will become an active participant in learning about hazards and preparing for them. After training, you may be called upon to support emergency services following a disaster.

So, who is the ideal CERT volunteer?

The Ideal CERT Volunteer

The ideal CERT volunteer is you! Anyone can be a part of a CERT program. Everyone, regardless of age or abilities, has the capacity to contribute to a CERT program.

Scouts, high school students, young adults, moms and dads, and senior citizens—people of all ages and backgrounds are found in CERT programs around the country.

What Can CERT Do for You?

The hands-on classroom training you receive in the CERT Basic course will prepare you to prepare for and handle many kinds of emergency and disaster situations. By knowing what to do and having the right tools and supplies on hand, CERT volunteers have the confidence that they can protect themselves and those they care for and minimize damage to their property.

Nervous?

CERT volunteers are only assigned to perform tasks for which they are trained and can confidently perform. Team safety is always the first priority. Volunteers should abide by their CERT SOPs and should never attempt to perform tasks outside of their training or comfort level.

CERT Volunteer Tasks

The types of tasks you may perform varies from program to program. Every sponsoring organization determines their CERT's functions, and the location and types of potential disasters vary from place to place.

Thus, a CERT in coastal South Carolina likely will include activities related to hurricanes, and a CERT in Wisconsin will likely include activities related to snow events.

What Training will I Receive?

CERT Training begins with this introductory online training course. For the next step, you will complete the CERT Basic Training Course. CERT Basic is a classroom-based course that offers both instruction and practice in numerous emergency and disaster preparation and response topics.

The CERT's sponsoring organization provides the classroom training. The CERT Basic Course is delivered in the community by a team of first responders and other qualified volunteers. Participants who complete the CERT Basic Training course become certified CERT volunteers.

CERT Basic Course: Overview

The CERT Basic Course is delivered in the community by a team of first responders and other qualified volunteers.

CERT Basic covers the following topics:

1. Disaster Preparedness

1. Unit Overview
2. Community Preparedness: Roles and Responsibilities
3. Hazards and Their Potential Impact
4. Impact on the Infrastructure
5. Home and Workplace Preparedness
6. Reducing the Impact of Hazards Through Mitigation
7. CERT Disaster Response
8. Additional Training for CERTs
9. Unit Summary

2. CERT Organization

1. Unit Overview
2. CERT Organization
3. CERT Mobilization
4. Documentation
5. Unit Summary

3. Disaster Medical Operations — Part 1

1. Unit Overview
2. Treating Life-Threatening Conditions
3. Basic First Aid Care
4. Unit Summary

4. Disaster Medical Operations — Part 2

1. Unit Overview
2. Mass Casualty Incidents
3. Functions of Disaster Medical Operations
4. Establishing Medical Treatment Areas
5. Conducting Head-to-Toe Assessments
6. Public Health Considerations
7. Unit Summary

5. Disaster Psychology

1. Unit Overview
2. Disaster Reactions
3. Self-Care and Team Well-Being
4. Working with Survivors' Emotional Responses
5. Unit Summary

6. Fire Safety and Utility Controls

1. Unit Overview
2. Fire Chemistry
3. Fire Size-up Considerations
4. Firefighting Resources
5. Fire Suppression Safety
6. Fire and Utility Hazards
7. Hazardous Materials
8. Unit Summary

7. Light Search and Rescue Operations

1. Unit Overview
2. Safety During Search and Rescue Operations
3. Conducting Interior and Exterior Search Operations
4. Conducting Rescue Operations
5. Unit Summary

8. CERT and Terrorism

1. Unit Overview
2. Terrorist Goals and Tactics
3. Preparing Your Community
4. Active Shooter Situations
5. Until Help Arrives
6. Hazmat and CBRNE
7. Unit Summary

9. Course Review, Final Exam, and Disaster Simulation

1. Unit Overview
2. Course Review
3. Final Exam
4. Disaster Simulation
5. Exercise Critique and Summary

Training Equipment and Supplies

During CERT Basic, participants are required to bring safety equipment (gloves, goggles, mask) and disaster supplies (bandages, flashlight, dressings) to use during the training sessions.

By doing this for each session, participants are building a disaster response kit of items that they will need during a disaster.

Additional Training

You may desire to take more training to build your knowledge and skills. Your CERT's sponsoring organization may offer additional training opportunities to expand your skills.

Ready.gov also offers additional training. Examples of topics include:

- Animal response
- Traffic and crowd management
- Emergency communications
- Flood response

Find a CERT

Ready.gov offers an online forum to help you locate a nearby CERT program. Select the [CERT Home Page](#) to access the CERT search tool and resources.

[Visit the ready.gov website.](#)

Limitations of your Training

Now that you've had time to review the material covered in this web-based training, you're nearly ready to move forward. But first a word of CAUTION!

Even though you've completed this web-based training, you're not trained to perform CERT functions.

Do NOT try to use any of the procedures introduced in this web-based training until you've completed the classroom-based CERT Basic Training course. That course provides the required instruction and supervised practice for you to become a fully trained and qualified CERT volunteer.

Lesson 3: Becoming Involved: Lesson Summary

This lesson discussed the benefits from participating in a CERT, the training you will need, and how you can locate a CERT . You should now be able to:

- Identify benefits of being a CERT volunteer.
- List components of the CERT training program.

Key points covered in this lesson include:

- Everyone can participate in a CERT program—age and abilities are not factors.
- Completing CERT training gives people confidence, knowledge, and skills to prepare for and survive disasters.
- Completing the classroom-based the CERT Basic training course is the only way to become a certified CERT volunteer.
- CERT training prepares individuals how to act as good Samaritans and apply their skills when situations arise in their daily lives.
- The CERT's sponsoring organization determines how and when to assign CERT volunteers. Volunteers are assigned according to the training they have received.