

## **National Volunteer Week: Stories of Success**

This year's National Volunteer Week falls on April 6 – 12, 2014. [Citizen Corps](#) and [CERT](#) (Community Emergency Response Team) programs both provide opportunities for individuals and organizations to serve their communities, making them better prepared and more resilient, and have proven to be an integral part of disaster preparedness and response efforts throughout the country. CERT volunteers learn basic disaster response skills and are organized into teams to assist their communities following disasters when professional responders are not immediately available to help. Volunteers also provide support to professional response agencies and help to prepare their communities before disasters. Citizen Corps Councils bring together community leaders, including representatives of volunteer organizations, to plan for emergencies before they happen.

Below are just a few examples of how CERT and Citizen Corps Councils have recently given back.

In one example, Citizen Corps and CERT teams in Waco, TX were critical in the response to the TX fertilizer plant explosion on April 17, 2013. They assisted with incident management activities, including checking responders, volunteers and other incident personnel in and out at the scene and performing data entry into WebEOC. In total, the local CERT teams contributed more than 120 hours of volunteer service and made a significant impact in assisting people in need.

Local CERT programs in Snohomish County and King County are also helping right now in Washington State with the Oso Mudslide. Some of their volunteer activities include helping with traffic control, security and radio support at a Red Cross shelter. In addition, volunteers are providing assistance at the Snohomish County Department of Emergency Management call center, helping unload supplies in various locations. Amongst the various other levels of assistance that volunteers are providing, it is anticipated that they will be further utilized as Oso moves into the recovery phase.

With proper training, everyday citizens can expand the resources of states and local communities to help them become more resilient. There are many resources available which offer training and opportunities for volunteering. Some of these resources include: getting trained in basic first aid and CPR through the local [American Red Cross](#) chapter; finding a volunteer opportunity through the [National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster \(VOAD\)](#); and the [Corporation for National and Community Service](#) which has many ways that citizens can volunteer to help their communities.