

Brown County, South Dakota CERT Lets First Responders Focus on Their Jobs during a Bomb Scare

CERT volunteers are often called upon to assist with anything from traffic accidents, to warming stations for firefighters, to light search and rescue operations. There are times, however, when CERT volunteers are asked to support even more dire emergencies.

On November 17, 2013, the Brown County, South Dakota CERT supported first responders during a bomb threat at a local Wal-Mart. While law enforcement officials focused on evacuating the store and securing the building, CERT volunteers brought in traffic barricades and helped close down surrounding streets in the area. Some volunteers worked side by side with first responders; while others remained in the safety zone, where they were able to support the response efforts from a safe distance and away from potential hazards, without inadvertently interfering with professional efforts.

When situations like the bomb scare arise, Brown County has a very efficient process for activating the CERT, using a web-based mass notification system. CERT volunteers are notified of activations with either a recorded message or text message sent automatically to their phone number by the web-based program. The CERT program resides under the Emergency Management Office, which other agencies can contact for assistance. Scott Meints, Director of Emergency Management for Brown County, advocates for CERT activation whenever the program is needed. Brown County Emergency Management, the Brown County Sheriff's Office, local police and fire departments, and the state program director are huge supporters of the successful program because they have seen firsthand how the CERT volunteers have helped in various emergency situations. With more than 100 trainees and five teams, CERT volunteers are able to respond as soon as they are activated, no matter where the need is.

For more information, please contact Scott Meints at Scott.Meints@browncounty.sd.gov.



Brown County CERT training uses a small-scale city to show examples.