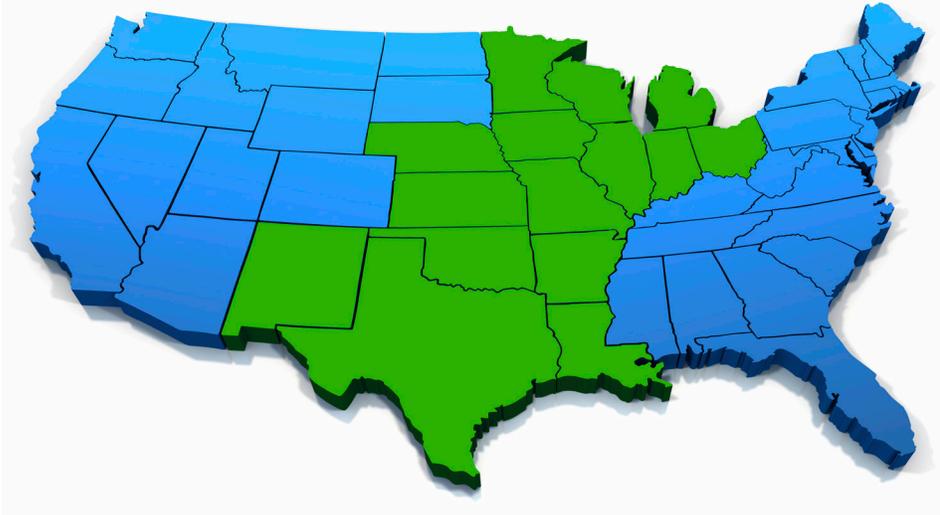




# National NEWSLETTER

Vol. 4 – Issue 3

## National CERT Newsletter: Stories from the Central U.S.



This issue of the National CERT Newsletter includes stories from CERT programs in the central U.S. The central states, in FEMA Regions V - VII, experience or are at risk for a wide range of disasters – floods, winter storms, tornados, earthquakes, and more. The CERT stories in this issue represent the efforts of the 610 registered CERT programs in the central U.S. They are all supporting disaster response and hometown resiliency in their communities.

For the next issue of the newsletter, we hope to feature and are seeking CERT stories from the western states and Pacific territories. If your CERT program is in FEMA Regions VIII, IX, or X (Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, Pacific territories, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming) and you have a newsletter story, please send it now to [cert@dhs.gov](mailto:cert@dhs.gov).

Thank you, and please keep those stories coming wherever you live!

### Green River, Ky. Regional CERTs Respond to Floods

When torrential rains pounded western Kentucky in the spring of 2011, all CERT programs in the Green River region were activated to assist emergency personnel in flooded areas along the Green and Ohio rivers.

The four CERT programs encompass seven counties: Daviess, Hancock, Henderson, McLean, Ohio, Union, and Webster. Jud Pomeroy, CERT



*The town of Green River flooding this spring.*

Coordinator, explained that “during the flood, our teams worked with emergency management on sandbagging

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<http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/>



NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS DIRECTORATE



## White House and FEMA Honor CERT Volunteer

*In this newsletter issue highlighting CERT people and programs in the central United States, we feature a 2011 Individual and Community Preparedness Award winner, Brenda Gormley from Denton County, Texas.*



*2011 Individual and Community Preparedness Award winner, Brenda Gormley*

Award ceremonies at the White House and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Headquarters honored individuals and organizations that make our nation safer, stronger, and better prepared. Among the recipients of FEMA's 2011 Individual and Community

Preparedness Awards, Brenda Gormley received a "Community Preparedness Hero" award for her achievements in coordinating the Denton County, Texas CERT program. The Hays County, Texas CERT program and the Union Parish, Louisiana CERT program received honorable mentions.

Brenda Gormley is regarded by her peers as a committed and tireless leader with a big heart and a passion for CERT.

Shari Brand, FEMA Region VI Community Preparedness Officer serving Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas and New Mexico had this to say about Brenda: "Some say they don't know how to keep their CERT members busy, and that just blows Brenda's mind because she always has something for her members to do volunteering at community events, getting additional training, supporting firefighter rehab, and most recently helping in a search and rescue effort. You can't slow her down. No, 'slow' is not in her vocabulary."

Gormley has been volunteering as the CERT Coordinator for more than six years and has grown the program from 11 members to over 500 active members. Ms. Brand commented, "She is an unpaid volunteer who works more than the average 40 hour work week. Her commitment, problem-solving skills, and creativity allow the program to succeed on many levels and do things that many other programs haven't done. And she considers every course she teaches to be an honor."

In 2009, under Gormley's leadership, Denton County's Citizen Corps Council received the National Award for Outstanding Citizen Corps Council. At the 2011 Texas Unites Conference, Gormley was the first recipient of the Jack Colley Citizen Corps Leadership Award. This award is given annually to recognize the outstanding leadership and service of a Citizen Corps volunteer.

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## Green River, Ky. Regional CERTs Respond to Floods

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operations and relocation of at-risk residents, and established and operated shelters. We also did damage assessment and door-to-door checks. It was ongoing for the better part of two weeks."

The flood emergency was not the first time that the Green River regional CERTs were simultaneously activated. In the winter of 2009, all seven counties suffered severe ice damage that brought down power lines throughout the region. "Some towns did not have power for four weeks," said Mr. Pomeroy. "Our members performed a 100% mandatory residential check and went door-to-door to ensure residents were safe. They were activated for a week."

Mr. Pomeroy explained that communication is a major issue during an emergency. "Keep in mind that both these events not only cut lines of communication, they also cut access to roads. The ice storm was so pervasive that 9-1-1 was down in a couple of counties. We lost the ability to communicate with law enforcement. [During the more recent flood activations] we had a bunch of ham radios and radio operators who were activated. They played a big part in keeping the lines of communication open."

As well-trained as members are, Mr. Pomeroy wants Green River regional CERT teams to know that "when you get a senior CERT member on the scene, you turn yourself over to them. The senior CERT member waits for the first professional to arrive. It is important for CERTs to use the ICS [Incident Command System]. I try to keep reinforcing that."

## Michigan MAP CERT Saves Home from Flood



MAP CERT members lay sandbags around a home. Photo courtesy of Stan Reese.

When local officials were skeptical that a house in the Hubbard Lake area of Alpena County, Mich. could be saved from severe flooding, the Montmorency, Alpena, and Presque Isle (MAP) CERT never gave up and ultimately saved the home from destruction.

**“ It blew their minds when they saw what we could do. ”**

*—Stan Reese, MAP CERT Coordinator*

Stan Reese, MAP CERT coordinator explained, “In April 2011, a dam had to be opened because of strong storms and this resulted in local flooding. We were called in the middle of the afternoon, and by 7 p.m. we had 35 CERT members [on the scene]. This activation occurred just 3 days after we completed advanced CERT training that focused on flood control.”

He added, “The commissioner and emergency manager of Alpena County were on the scene and didn’t think we could fight this flood. There were already several houses down the river that were too far gone. If we had been called sooner, we might have been able to save them,” Mr. Reese said.

The CERT members did believe that one house was worth trying to save. “We were there for 6 hours sandbagging until we ran out of bags. We built a wall around the place. We had 15 walk-on volunteers who were locals and just wanted to help,” said Mr. Reese. “I was in charge of the safety of each person. I made sure no one got too close to the river. We finished around 10 p.m. that night. We pumped the water out of the house and held off [more water] until the waters receded. I was really pleased because there were so many volunteers.”

CERT was in charge at the scene because police were upstream tending to other emergencies. “We did an

assessment of the whole neighborhood. Police trust us,” he said.

“Afterwards officials told us, ‘we thought there was no way you could have saved that house.’ It was pretty amazing to hear that,” said Mr. Reese. “It blew their minds when they saw what we could do.”

The team later learned that the house they saved was owned by inactive CERT members who were vacationing in Florida. Mr. Reese said that their son, who was on the premises during the flood, was grateful and told them that what they did was no small task. “He thanked us and said that his parents still had a place to sleep when they came back. Their home is still here because of CERT.”

The Alpena Sheriff’s Department has been so impressed with MAP CERT that it has funded a CERT trailer, generator, and 15 high band radios for members. Mr. Reese said, “We are now working with search teams. You’d be shocked at what this team can do.”



MAP CERT operations center during flood activation. Photo courtesy of Stan Reese.

## Texas Youth Complete Pre-CERT Training at Summer Camp



*Teen CERT Logo*

They are known as the “Texas 27,” a group of Texas teens who applied for and were accepted to attend Extreme Youth Leadership (EYL) Training Camp to pilot Teen CERT training in August 2011. Sponsored by the Texas School Safety Center (TxSSC), the camp was held at Schreiner University in Kerrville, Texas.

The 27 youth attendees were high school sophomores and juniors who expressed an interest in emergency preparedness. “It was a nomination and application process,” said Victoria Calder, Director of the TxSSC. “Word went out to CERT adult groups around the state to nominate youth. Some were nominated through JROTC or if they had an existing youth program. Students provided letters of support from adult support groups and school supervisors.”

EYL Training Camp is an established program that provides leadership skills for Texas teens. The Teen CERT component was added as part of the 4-day program. “We decided to train the kids in basic orientation to CERT (12-14 hours) with the goal of having them go back to their respective communities and create Teen CERTs,” said Ms. Calder. “We wanted them to be certified, but if they spent 20 hours doing that, they would have missed out on the other fun aspects of the camp.”

“We wanted this to be developed by youth, for youth, with adult supervision. The goal was for each student to develop a plan of action to recruit additional students, present their plan for implementing the CERT training to school administrators, and engage their schools in being more prepared for emergencies.”

Now that camp is over and the teens are back in their respective communities, the “Texas 27” have created a Facebook page to keep in touch and support each other. “They had a reunion over winter break. Many of them are requesting CERT training in their communities. Several teens are requesting CERT training at an orphanage,” said Ms. Calder.

She added that “in Austin, two youths have requested additional CERT training. In many cases, they want the full course, so we are working on trying to get them local trainers. Some are participating with the adult CERTs in their communities.” Many local CERT programs accept participants who are just 14 years old, so high school students are encouraged to join.

**“ We wanted this to be developed by youth, for youth, with adult supervision. ”**

*–Victoria Calder, TxSSC Director*

Going forward, Ms. Calder explained that TxSSC intends to start the application process earlier in the year. “We would like to put the word out through schools to give parents and teens enough time to work around summer vacation plans and going to camp. We are also developing a matrix as a better way to determine who gets selected.”

In addition, they want to expand the training so that teens get the full CERT Basic Training at camp. “We have decided to provide the full course next time, and the way to do that is to have the teens come a day early and get the additional 8 hours of CERT training,” said Ms. Calder. “This way they can still enjoy the fun that the camp has to offer.”

## Evansville/Vanderburgh County, Ind. Revives CERT Program



*CERT member Sam Downey participates in fire extinguisher training.  
Photo courtesy of John Murphy*

Keeping members informed about the program's funding status is a priority. Although Evansville/Vanderburgh County CERT is currently funded through a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) grant, Mr. Murphy wants members to consider alternate sources of funding. "If we look for sponsors or donations, we don't have to rely as heavily on federal funding. Money is tight. Maybe



*CERT members practicing fire extinguisher use.*

After a 4-year hiatus due to lack of funding, a reactivated and reenergized Evansville/Vanderburgh CERT is making strides to once again recruit and train community volunteers for the program.

John Murphy, CERT Program Manager, was new to the Evansville/Vanderburgh County area in 2011, but he was not new to CERT. "I moved here from Washington where I had been involved in CERT and had a lot of experience with the program," he said. "I got in touch with emergency management here and learned that they wanted to get CERT running again. I got here at the right time."

Mr. Murphy began by contacting former members to reengage them in CERT. He said, "It was a challenge because people had lost interest, moved, or passed away. Some were upset because they were trained, turned loose, and there was no follow up. They asked why it took

so long for the program to reactivate. We tried to explain that without any funding, we couldn't do much."

The first training class was held in February 2011, and to date there have been five graduating classes with a

***“We want to keep our team active so they understand that they are wanted and needed in the community.”***

*–John Murphy  
CERT Program Manager*

total of 90 new members trained and certified. Mr. Murphy is also pleased that 12 former CERT volunteers have returned to the program. "We are excited about that," he said.

someone has an idea. Involve your team in the thought process because maybe someone knows about a company that can help."

Although there have been no emergency activations since restarting the program, members are keeping busy. "Training and exercises can be relatively inexpensive. We make sure to offer some continuing exercises – even if it's just table top exercises," said Mr. Murphy. "Our members participate in community events where we have flyers and preparedness information and talk about CERT. We also have a Facebook page with up-to-date information. We want to keep our team active so they understand that they are wanted and needed in the community."

## White House and FEMA Honor CERT Volunteer *(Continued from page 2)*

In all, seventeen local leaders and organizations received Individual and Community Preparedness awards for innovative practices and achievements in community preparedness. Award recipients in other topic areas include:

- American Red Cross of Greater Chicago - Outstanding Achievement in Youth Preparedness
- Arkansas State Citizen Corps - Outstanding State Citizen Corps Council Initiatives
- Be Ready Alliance Coordinating for Emergencies - Promising Partnerships
- Brenda Gormley, Tod Pritchard, and Carolyn Bluhm - Community Preparedness Heroes
- Citizen Corps of St. Claire County - Innovative Use of Technology
- Cobb County Health Preparedness and Response - Outstanding Achievement in Public Health
- David L. Maack - Engagement with Faith-Based Communities
- Earthquake Country Alliance - Awareness to Action
- John D. Solomon - First Annual Recipient of the John D. Solomon Preparedness Award
- The Great Central U.S. ShakeOut - Outstanding Drill, Exercise or Event
- NBC Universal CERT - Outstanding Community Emergency Response Team Initiative
- New York City - Outstanding Local Citizen Corps Council Initiatives
- San Manuel Band of Serrano Mission Indians - Preparing the Whole Community
- Washington State Emergency Management - Innovative Training and Education Programs

More information, including Honorable Mention Award recipients, is posted on the Citizen Corps national website. <http://citizencorps.gov/newsevents/awards/2011/winnerslist.shtm>.

## New CERT Resources for Training Teens



*Teen CERT members preparing for an exercise at Cordova High School in Rancho Cordova, Calif. (Photo courtesy of Linda Greer)*

The National CERT Program Office at FEMA has announced new materials and a webpage to support a nationwide effort to train teenagers in CERT.

In the CERT training, high school students learn basic disaster response skills including fire suppression, light search and rescue, team organization, disaster psychology, terrorism awareness, and disaster medical operations. In fact, the hands-on activities and classroom training provide teenagers with the same CERT Basic Training course that adults receive.

The training empowers teams and individuals with skills needed to protect themselves and assist others in the event

of an emergency. For teens, participation in CERT is a great opportunity to learn skills that can last a lifetime. They will give back to their community, fulfill community service requirements, build leadership experience, be part of a team, and make their schools and communities safer.

While most local CERT programs across the country have a minimum age limit that allows teens to participate in training, CERT training in high schools and organizations like 4-H is also becoming increasingly popular. Some high schools choose to integrate CERT training into the school curriculum, such as using health or physical education classes, while others choose to offer it as after-school, weekend, or summer activities.

Whatever the arrangement, experience has shown that CERT training in high schools is more easily established and sustained when closely connected to the local CERT program. A local CERT can provide guidance, trainers, resources, and shared opportunities like exercises that include adult and teen CERT members.

But there are clear differences in engaging teen vs. adult volunteers, especially in how the CERT model is “marketed” to high school students and administrators, and in how the CERT Basic Training course is delivered.

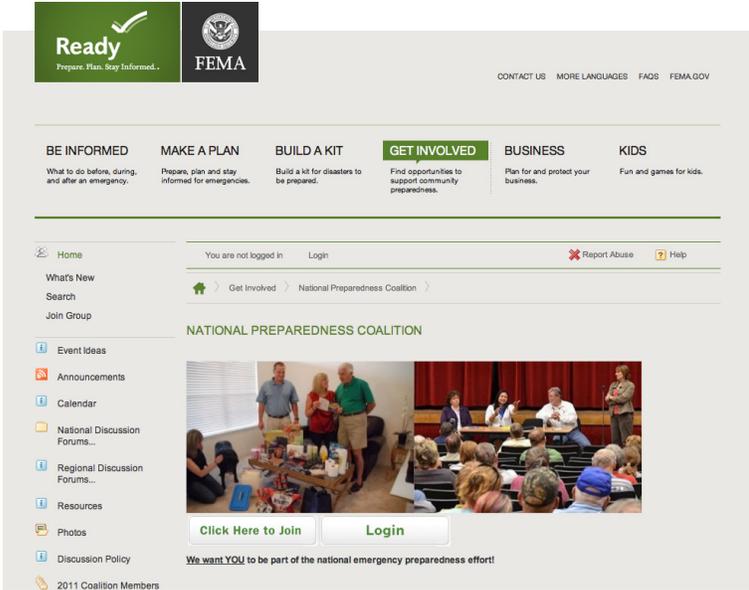
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## You're Invited to the New CERT Online Forum!

## New CERT Resources for Training Teens

*(Continued from page 6)*



To help address these differences, National CERT provides trainers and local CERT program managers/coordinators with new training materials. These materials include techniques for effective delivery of the CERT training to teenagers, tips for managing a teen CERT class, and recommendations for sustaining student interest. Additionally, the guide on Launching and Maintaining the Training supports efforts to start and sustain CERT training in the high school and to leverage available resources.

New FEMA teen CERT resources include the following:

- **Teen CERT: Launching and Maintaining the Training Guide** for program managers
- **Teen CERT Annex to CERT Basic Training Instructor Guide** for instructors
- **Teen CERT Annex to CERT Train-the-Trainer Instructor Guide and Participant Manual** for Train-the-Trainer course instructors and participants. States that are hosting the CERT Train-the-Trainer course are encouraged to incorporate the Teen CERT Annex.
- **Frequently Asked Questions about Teen CERT** for teens interested in taking the training and separately for adults interested in starting the training
- **Making a Difference with Teen CERT brochure** for individuals and organizations promoting local training deliveries
- **Teen CERT PSA (English and Spanish) downloads** for individuals and organizations promoting local training deliveries
- **Links to other Teen CERT Videos** for individuals and organizations interested in seeing how various communities are engaging teens in CERT

Connect with the CERT community across the country to exchange information, stories, successes, and ideas! You are invited to join the discussion at the CERT Online Forum—a place to connect with CERT members, managers, trainers, and CERT advocates everywhere. Please join us!

Registration to the forum is FREE. Once registered, you will find discussions about current and innovative practices and initiatives from the CERT community across the country. You will also find information about new tools and resources such as the Teen Discussion CERT resources recently posted on the National CERT website. Additionally, the forum offers experienced CERT leaders the opportunity to mentor and guide those who are interested in CERT or have recently started a program.

Need help registering? If you have not yet registered please begin by going to National Preparedness Coalition website at <http://community.fema.gov> and click the “Click Here to Join” button.

On the registration/login page, click the “Register” button under the New Users section to proceed with online registration. Complete the online registration questionnaire and click the “Register” button. You are now officially signed up and logged in to the group! You will be returned to the National Preparedness Coalition home page.

All of the new resources are available at the national CERT website. Please visit <http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert> and click on Teen CERT.

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## You're Invited to the New CERT Online Forum! *(Continued from page 7)*

Next, it is important that you go to the very bottom of the page and click "Join this Group" and you will be automatically directed to a page where you can manage your email notifications. (If you do not click "Join this Group," then you will be able to view the topics on the forum, but you won't be able to start your own discussions or reply to other discussions.)

Now you will choose how often you'd like to receive emails about the activity on the discussion forums: immediately, daily, or never. Upon completion of this section, you will be taken back to the National Preparedness Coalition home page and will have full user rights to start new discussions or reply to other posts. From the home page, you will click the CERT Forum link located directly above the link to Resources and this will take you to the forum.

You're in! Now you may begin reviewing the discussions and replies by clicking on the subject title of each post. To post your own discussion, scroll to the bottom of the page and click "Start a new discussion."

We hope you enjoy connecting with fellow CERT-ers and find this experience to be beneficial and enjoyable. Please help the new network grow by telling others about it. Let's get social!

## FAQs

**Q:** Refresher training for CERT members who have completed the Basic Training course seems important. What are CERTs around the country doing?

**A:** Refresher training on skills and concepts learned in the CERT Basic Training course is an important part of any local CERT program. Most local programs conduct refresher training for their members. This provides an opportunity for CERT participants to brush up on their knowledge and skills, especially skills like medical triage that can be challenging since they may be practiced infrequently and are hardly ever used.

Many local CERT programs set a requirement for members to participate in a certain amount of refresher or supplemental training each year to maintain "active status" in the program. Such a requirement provides a clear expectation about refresher training for both members and the program.

In addition to helping sustain the skills of individual CERT members, refresher training contributes to overall program maintenance in a number of ways. These include strengthening team capabilities and providing an opportunity for participants to engage with the fire department or other agency that sponsors CERT. Along with strengthening skills with other CERT volunteers, this regular interaction can help recharge everyone's commitment to the program.

One of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to provide refresher training for program participants is to encourage them to sit in on modules of the Basic Training course they have completed when those modules are conducted for a new group of trainees. Let CERT graduates know whenever a new round of the Basic Training will be offered and invite them to "drop in for a refresher" on any modules they choose.

Refresher training through an exercise is another popular way to help CERT participants and teams maintain their skills. Tabletops, simple drills, and various other types of exercises are great training activities and may be the "gold standard" of refresher training offered by local programs. To make exercises more manageable to conduct, local CERT programs

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In the summer of 2012, the National CERT Program Office will publish a library of 20 CERT exercises designed for local CERT program managers/coordinators. The library will provide a series of exercise templates that can be tailored to a local CERT program.

CERT “exercise swaps” is yet another way to offer refresher training to program participants. Exercise swaps rely on the teams themselves to conduct exercises for each other. Under guidance from the local CERT program manager/coordinator, two groups receive basic training in exercise design, then design and conduct exercises for each other. Exercise swaps allow each team to determine the objectives of its exercise (e.g., “Our team really needs to get more practice on setting up a medical treatment area and on establishing communication among team members...”) and can allow for a neighborhood CERT to go through an exercise in its own neighborhood. The other group has the same opportunities when the swap occurs (usually a few months later).

Basic training on exercise design is a prerequisite for a successful exercise swap. In the summer of 2012, the National CERT Program Office will also publish supplemental training on exercise swaps. The training includes two 4-hour modules designed to give CERT members the basic skills needed to design, conduct, and evaluate an exercise for another CERT group in their community. Like any exercise, exercise swaps can provide all the benefits of great refresher training for CERT members.

Finally, an easy way for CERT participants to refresh their knowledge of the CERT basics is to take the online training at the National CERT website. The search and rescue tutorial ([www.citizencorps.gov/cert/training\\_mat.shtm#sar](http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/training_mat.shtm#sar)) allows CERT-trained individuals to review and refresh their skills in sizeup and search and rescue techniques. Teams can also use the tutorial as a group refresher activity. IS317: Introduction to CERT ([www.citizencorps.gov/cert/training\\_mat.shtm#317](http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/training_mat.shtm#317)) includes six modules and should take about six hours for a CERT participant to complete. IS317 is introductory, but can still provide a useful refresher for those who have completed the CERT Basic Training course.

## Submitting Stories to the National CERT Newsletter

The National CERT Newsletter is published quarterly and welcomes stories from local, state, tribal, and territorial CERT Programs. For example:

- CERT in Action – Activations in actual emergencies
- CERT exercises you have conducted
- A CERT member who has gone above and beyond the call of duty
- Community awards/commendations your CERT Program/teams have received
- Innovative ways you have dealt with challenges in your CERT Program

When submitting a story, please include:

- City/state of event
- Names of people/organizations involved
- Date(s) of activity
- Author’s contact information
- Other relevant information

Format: Articles should be between 50 and 150 words. Submit text as a Microsoft Word file or paste article text directly into e-mail. (PDF files cannot be used.)

Photos: Submit as an e-mail attachment in JPG or TIF file format. Include names of people in photo and a description of what they are doing and why. Please provide only photos approved for publication.

Deadline: Articles considered for the next publication must be received by June 30, 2012. Send your articles to [cert@dhs.gov](mailto:cert@dhs.gov). Include in subject line: “Submission for CERT Newsletter.”

Note: CERT retains the right to edit all stories for length, clarity, and accuracy.

Acceptance: Publication of submitted materials is based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to timeliness, space available, completeness of information, and relevance.