



Stories from Across the U.S.

This issue of the National CERT Newsletter includes stories that represent the efforts of CERT programs in four states (California, Delaware, Missouri, and Oklahoma). They are all supporting emergency preparedness, disaster response and hometown resiliency in their own and in some cases, neighboring communities.

For the next issue of the newsletter, we hope to feature and are seeking CERT stories from the eastern states, which experience a wide range of disasters—including winter storms, tornadoes and most recently, hurricanes. If your CERT program is in FEMA Regions I - III and you have a newsletter story, images, and/or video from the Hurricane Sandy response and recovery effort, please send it now to cert@dhs.gov.

Thank you, and please keep those stories coming wherever you live, even if they are not necessarily about Sandy!

Neighboring CERT Programs Help in Joplin Aftermath

In the late afternoon of Sunday, May 22, 2011, a powerful and dangerous EF5 tornado struck the town of Joplin, Missouri. The tornado killed 158 people and injured more than 1,000. First responders, citizen volunteers, and organizations such as the American Red Cross, arrived on scene immediately after the tornado to conduct search and rescue, clean up debris, and provide shelter for displaced survivors.

CERT members contacted Phil Amtower, Christian County's Director of Emergency Management and CERT Program Manager, as soon as the tornado struck, each member eager to provide help. On the third day after the tornado, 57 Christian County, Oklahoma,

CERT members set out for Joplin, which is about 90 miles away.

The group worked with local emergency management in Joplin to help with the response. Mr. Amtower explained, "FEMA teams and fire departments conducted search and rescue operations on the hardest hit areas during the first couple of days after the tornado. When we arrived on the scene the third day [after the tornado], a lot of people were still on the missing person's list. We teamed up with military personnel and the police department to conduct search and rescue in outlying areas—fields, wooded areas, places where the tornado could have carried victims.

(Continued on page 2)

IN THIS ISSUE

NEIGHBORING CERT PROGRAMS HELP IN JOPLIN AFTERMATH	1
CERT VOLUNTEERS HELP CITIZENS AFTER A TWO-ALARM FIRE	2
CERT VOLUNTEER SPRINGS INTO ACTION TO HELP DRIVER IN TRAFFIC ACCIDENT	3
USC CERT IGNITES A CULTURE OF PREPAREDNESS	3
THE OLYMPICS COME TO COSTA MESA!	5
ORDER YOUR FREE CERT BASIC TRAINING MANUALS	6
FAQS	7
HOW TO SUBMIT A STORY	7

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



Neighboring CERT Programs Help in Joplin Aftermath

(Continued from page 1)

Linda Barger, Christian County’s Associate Director of Emergency Management and CERT volunteer, added, “Our volunteers just wanted to help. After we completed search and rescue efforts, we teamed up with the American Red Cross and helped locate missing people via their Safe and Well Program.”



A local resident sits amongst the rubble in the aftermath of the Joplin Tornado

The Safe and Well Program is an online tool where survivors can register their locations and let loved ones know that they are safe. It also allows family members to search for missing loved ones. [Learn more about the tool.](#)

The volunteers worked for days, from sun up to sun down. Barger explained, “We visited shelters, hospitals, and neighbors of missing victims. We had to use GPS to locate homes because street signs were not reliable. We looked in damaged homes

for cell phones, or bills with phone numbers...anything that could give us clues. Our efforts helped locate the whereabouts of most of the people on the list.”

“*People were so thankful that we were there to help. It was a very emotional time. The tornado devastated the town, and sometimes we did not have good news to deliver.*”

– Barb Smith

Barb Smith, a volunteer for the Christian County CERT said, “People were so thankful that we were there to help. It was a very emotional time. The tornado devastated the town, and sometimes we did not have good news to deliver.”

Overall, 97 members of the Christian County CERT volunteered over 3,500 hours of time in the tornado’s aftermath. Many of these hours were spent volunteering as part of T.V.s Extreme Home Makeover, a show that built seven new homes in seven days.

Says Barb Smith, “We are a stronger community now, and we are also like a close-knit family. Our work in Joplin has caused people to recognize us more and more as an important part of the community.”

More Information

To learn more about the Christian County CERT program email Linda Barger, lindabarger@christiancountymo.gov, or visit the [program’s web page](#).

CERT Volunteers Help Citizens After a Two-Alarm Fire

In the early hours of November 29, 2012, a fire broke out in two apartment buildings in Brookline, MA. Officer Casey Hatchett of the Brookline Police Department responded to the fire and learned that 10-20 residents would be displaced. She activated the Brookline CERT to help set

up a shelter for the victims in a local senior center.

Officer Hatchett contacted the local public transportation authority and arranged for a bus to transport the displaced residents to the shelter.

When the bus arrived Brookline CERT

members were already on site, waiting with warm clothing, food, and coffee to provide to the victims. Throughout the remainder of that morning and into the afternoon, CERT volunteers communicated with local responders to make certain that efforts were

(Continued on page 4)

CERT Volunteer Springs into Action to Help Driver in Traffic Accident

The morning of December 1, 2012 started out as a normal Delaware morning. Donzella Johnson was driving to work when traffic suddenly started to slow. She then witnessed a vehicle slide across the highway, hit a guardrail, and bounce back onto the highway, speeding into oncoming traffic. The car then hit a light pole and spun into the parking lot of a local store. When the car stopped moving, Ms. Johnson noticed that the car was enveloped in smoke.

Having completed CERT Basic Training in November 2011, Ms. Johnson always keeps a CERT Backpack in the trunk of her car. She quickly went into action, pulling her backpack out of her trunk and running to help the man in the vehicle. When she arrived, another couple had already pulled the driver from the car. Ms. Johnson's backpack was equipped with a blanket and bottle of water, which she offered to the driver.

By the time Ms. Johnson returned her attention to the highway, traffic had become extremely congested. She knew that the best thing to do was to put on her CERT vest and helmet and get to work, directing traffic and maneuvering stalled vehicles in order to enable access for the arriving emergency vehicles: a fire truck, an ambulance, and the state police.

Ms. Johnson credits the quality of the CERT training for her fast response to the accident. "Having the CERT equipment

with me was a great help. People saw my vest and believed that I was someone they should be paying attention to," she explained. "The training gave me the knowledge and confidence to quickly respond and help in the situation."

“The training gave me the knowledge and confidence to quickly respond and help in the situation.”

– Donzella Johnson

Once the scene was under control, first responders complimented Ms. Johnson on her response and asked her where she had received her training. She told them about the CERT Training, and one of the firefighters on the scene—who was also military police in the Army National Guard—expressed his interest in receiving the training as well.

More Information

Want to know more? Email Donzella Johnson, donzella.johnson@state.de.us

USC CERT Ignites a Culture of Preparedness

As the largest private sector employer in Los Angeles, with a city population of about 4 million, where earthquakes are a geographical reality, and with responsibility for the safety of more than 38,000 students, emergency preparedness is not an option for the University of Southern California (USC).

Since it first opened its doors to 53 students in 1880, USC has grown significantly and also become a major research institution—making labs and chemicals a part of day-to-day life on campus.

In 2007, USC launched a CERT program, with a class taught by the local fire department. Recognizing its unique needs, USC decided to bring CERT training in-house. "We really liked the CERT basic training, but we also needed training that

was customized for our environment," said Emergency Manager Steve Goldfarb. "In the event of a county or state-wide emergency, USC has to be self-sufficient because government agencies would not be in a position to provide immediate support to our campus community."

USC CERT has a steady membership of about 300 staff and faculty, who have to complete the CERT training plus fire suppression and hazardous materials awareness training. Demand for the training is consistently high, with classes of 50 filling up within hours of being announced. The Office of Fire Safety & Emergency Planning delivers two CERT trainings each year, as well as quarterly review workshops and annual full-scale drills to ensure skill

(Continued on page 4)

CERT Volunteers Help Citizens After a Two-Alarm Fire

(Continued from page 2)

properly coordinated. CERT volunteers also helped the victims with other needs, such as contacting families, or securing necessary medications for some victims.

Officer Hatchett commented, “The CERT program works out beautifully because it frees up emergency responders. The CERT training gives volunteers confidence and [also] teaches them boundaries.”

As for the CERT members themselves, Officer Hatchett says, “They are an incredible group of compassionate people who want to help their community members. In an emergency, they bring a familiar, friendly face and help put survivors at ease.”

The 125-member Brookline CERT program has been active since 2004 and has responded to a number of emergencies including other fires, missing person searches, and a toxic water emergency. They are also involved in public education such as a recent talk at a local Senior Citizen Housing complex, attended by about 75 residents.

Getting involved in public education is one of the ways that Brookline CERT keeps volunteers engaged, which Officer Hatchett says is essential throughout the year.

USC CERT Ignites a Culture of Preparedness

(Continued from page 3)



USC Fire Safety Specialist Robert Forsberg (yellow jacket) leads a hands-on fire suppression skills training, taught to all USC CERT members.

retention. USC has also built strong relationships with emergency response services at the city and county levels. Annual full-scale drills are always organized in partnership with public sector agencies and local emergency response services.

USC has taught one class for students in the past, but found that the transient nature of that group and the academic demands on their time made it difficult for them to commit to ongoing skill retention workshops. “There is a cost involved with building and sustaining a CERT program,” said Mr. Goldfarb. “Our staff and faculty tend to stay longer than students typically do, so we have found them to be the most stable source of members. They also bring a range of skills, experiences and languages to the USC community that add great value to the CERT program.”

Each year California organizes [the Great ShakeOut](#), a statewide earthquake simulation drill that was launched in 2008, and the largest of

its kind in the world. Participation in the event has become an integral part of USC’s academic calendar, with a two-week long advance media push to encourage all members of the school’s community to take part.

“ *In the event of a county or state-wide emergency, USC has to be self-sufficient because government agencies would not be in a position to provide immediate support to our campus community.* ”

– Steve Goldfarb,
Emergency Manager

Although there have been no major incidents since the program was launched, USC CERT regularly puts its skills to the test at building evacuations and crowd and traffic management at university events—from fireworks shows to graduations and football games.

More Information

For more information about USC’s CERT program, contact Steve Goldfarb: sgoldfarb@caps.usc.edu



More Information

Contact Casey Hatchett, chatchett@brooklinema.gov, for more information about the Brookline CERT program and community education work.

The Olympics Come to Costa Mesa!



The winning team with CMFD Chief Tom Arnold

In 2012, the Costa Mesa Fire Department (CMFD) CERT, in California, decided to engage CERT volunteers in a friendly “personal preparedness” competition, dubbed the “CERT Olympics!” Volunteers were divided into teams and competed in five different activities designed to reinforce the skills learned in the CERT Basic Training course.

The five activities included:

Station 1 – Splinting

Competing teams came across a victim in need—as represented by a skeleton wrapped in a blanket— along with various, non-traditional, household items, including bubble wrap, rulers, yard sticks, etc. Teams had to use these items to splint and bandage the victim, and were awarded points based on the best use of materials, effective victim care, and the overall safety of the team.

Station 2 – Telephone

To practice communication skills, teams were instructed to send verbal messages to each other similar to the game of “telephone.” The last recipient of the message had to write the message down as accurately as possible.

Points were awarded for each word written down in the correct order of the original message.

Station 3 – CERT Final Exam

Most of the CERT Olympics contestants had taken older versions of the CERT Basic Training course. As a result, this activity required team members to answer every final exam question on the newest version of the CERT Basic Training course. Two points were awarded per correct answer.

Station 4 – Home Hazard Hunt

Teams earned one point for every hazard they named correctly in a cardboard house with 25 photos of “home hazards.” Bonus points were given for listing mitigation ideas.

Station 5 – Name the Use

At the fifth station, teams found a collection of miscellaneous items including a prescription bottle, a tennis ball container, a brown paper bag with handles, a shoebox, and a ruler. Teams had to list as many proper emergency uses as possible for each one.

Prizes for team members included medals, a team photo with the Fire Department Chief, and highlights in the annual banquet movie.

Mayor Bloomberg Recognizes CERT Volunteers In Sandy Response

On February 11, 2013, Mayor Bloomberg took time to recognize the dedication of CERT volunteers to New York’s Hurricane Sandy response and recovery efforts. The mayor was speaking at a graduation ceremony for 103 new CERT volunteers.

[Read the full story.](#)

(Continued on page 6)

The Olympics Come to Costa Mesa!

(Continued from page 5)



A team tackles the splinting exercise

“The event was a success and reiterated the core values of CERT—practice, safety and teamwork,” said Brenda Emrick, one of the event’s organizers. “We believe in exercising our skills with a slight twist on the core elements of CERT response, which adds an element of fun and helps us to build relationships among our members.”

CMFD CERT’s creative approach to teambuilding, reinforcing teamwork, and reinforcing learned skills resulted in a fun and effective day for all!

More Information

If you’re planning to try something different at your next volunteer training, maybe you can ask Brenda for some tips! brenda.emrick@costamesaca.gov

Have you ordered your FREE CERT Basic Training Manuals yet?

The CERT Basic Training Instructor Guide and Participant Manual in both English and Spanish, as well as the new Teen CERT Basic Training Participant Workbook in English are now available.

HOW TO ORDER

1. Local programs will receive a copy of the order form from the State, to be **completed and returned** to the State for review.
2. The State can either compile all the orders from local programs and place one large order; or
3. The State can ask local programs to send in their own order forms. If so, local programs should **CC their State** when submitting an order.
4. **ALL order forms should be sent to the FEMA Publications Warehouse by:**
 - Email: fema-publications-warehouse@fema.dhs.gov
 - Phone: 1-800-480-2520 (8AM–5PM, EST, M–F)
 - Fax: 1-240-699-0525
 - Mail: FEMA Distribution Center, 4440 Buckeystown Pike, Frederick, MD 21704

PLEASE NOTE

- DO provide your name, the name of your organization, a street address, city, state, zip code, phone number, and fax number for delivery on the form.
- Shipping from the **FEMA warehouse is free to local programs when they order directly.**
- The FEMA Publication Warehouse should take approximately one week to process forms. Once approved, orders should arrive at the address provided within 3–6 weeks.

Quantities are limited. ICPD will review ALL incoming orders to ensure they are coming from registered programs, so the name on the order form should be the designated State or local point of contact on the Citizen Corps/CERT website.

Direct any questions you may have to CERT@fema.dhs.gov—you will receive an answer within 48 hours.



FAQs

Q: How can we expand our CERT program?

A: Think about who ELSE can benefit from CERT training. CERT is a great learning and training experience for everyone. Holding a few additional classes is a great way to engage new members of your community. Some great places to find new members are:

Colleges/Universities

Campus CERT can teach students essential preparedness skills and help them to help others during an emergency, on or off campus. Campus CERT graduates can volunteer as a member of a campus CERT team or support other local CERT efforts.

Schools

Both staff and students can benefit from the important safety and preparedness information in CERT. CERT can support staff training requirements and encourage a culture of preparedness in schools. For older students, Teen CERT is a fun way to teach youth about the importance of being prepared and knowing what do after an emergency.

Houses of Worship

CERT is an exciting way for faith based agencies to become aware of and involved in local emergency response operations. CERT can assist houses of worship in understanding emergency and disaster response as well as learn about basic preparedness and safety. CERT training can also prepare those who are interested in volunteering after a disaster at the local, national or international level.

Businesses

CERT in the workplace can provide safety training to employees, creating a culture of safety and preparedness. CERT encourages employees to be prepared at home, leading to a more resilient workforce. Workplace CERT teams can support on-site safety and response, such as evacuation drills and accountability.

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

Deadline: Articles considered for the next publication must be received by March 31, 2013. Send your articles to 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.