Community Emergency Response Team Volunteering:
Becoming a trained ally to act effectively and safely in local, state, and federal disaster mitigation and response

Community Emergency Response Team Basics

Filling the gaps through Community Emergency Response Teams.

What CERT does:

Mission-

- Resource augmentation
- Educational outreach,
- Preparedness best practice instruction and assistance,
- Planning mitigation/preparedness assistance to organizations

Some of what CERT Volunteers can do:

Secondary mission- directly supporting Emergency Management through:

Field Operations

- Traffic control
- Transportation/logistical movements/points of distribution (PODS)
- Search and Rescue (SAR) – light urban/wilderness
- Damage assessments
- Firefighter and disaster worker rehabilitation and support

Support Operations

- Communications (ARES) and Viper Radio Support
- Information Technology (live stream/drone ops/command post support)
- Command post operations (EOC/FTOC) including security and information logs
- Shelter Erection and Management (including security and pets/livestock)
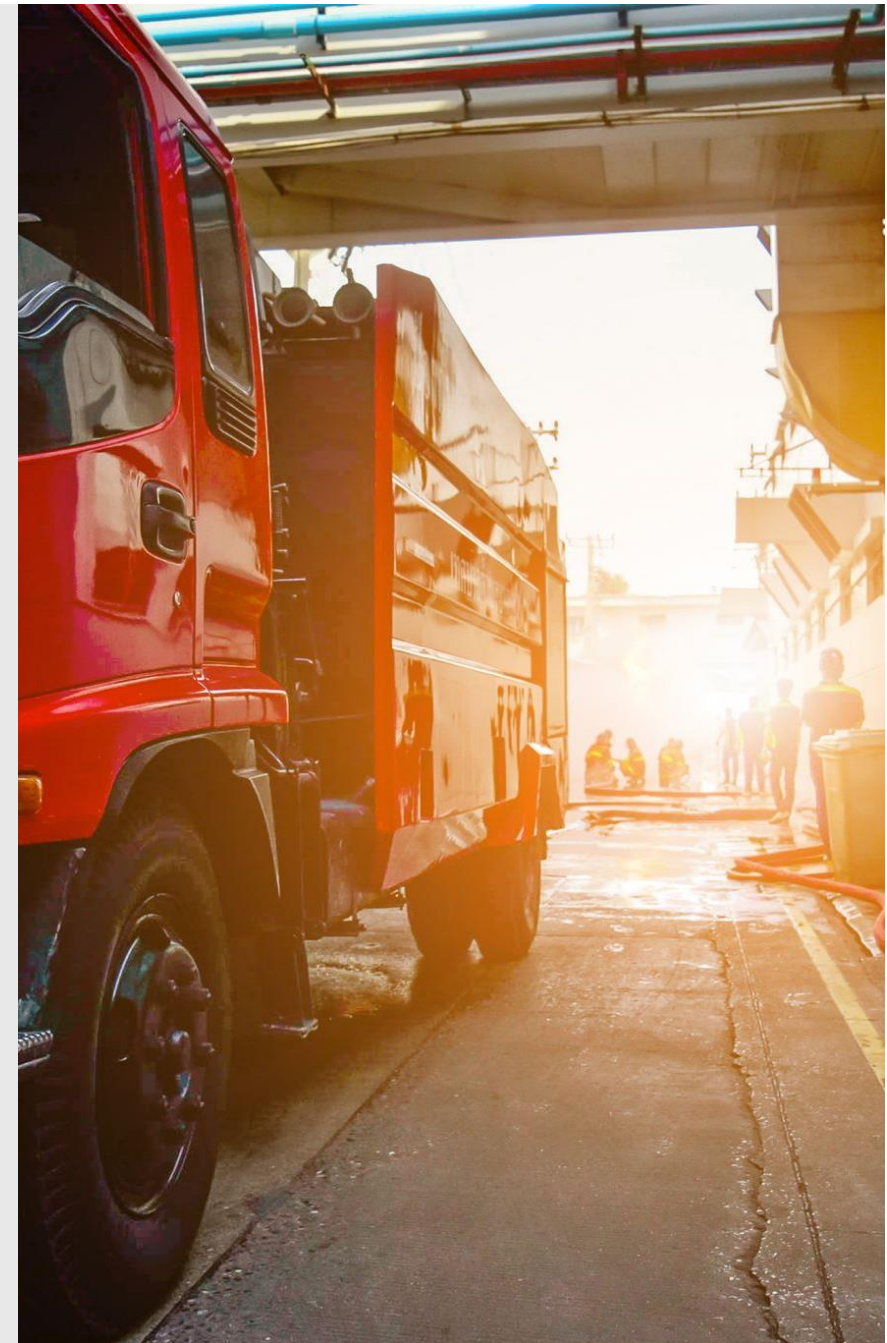
What we do not do:

CERT serves as the support for the 911

- Support functions more than operations

- Our goal is to assist public safety agencies so that their personnel will not be stretched too thin during emergencies

- Because we recruit volunteers from our population, we bring additional skill sets and subject matter expertise to the Emergency Support Functions (ESF)

- We work hand in hand with community partners under the umbrella of the Incident Command System (ICS)

Community Partners

- Municipal/Volunteer Fire Departments and their auxiliaries

- Emergency Medical Services

- State Forestry and Dept of Emergency Management

- Sheriffs Office, Police, Highway Patrol

- County Health Departments, Department of Social Services, Animal Services and others

- Nonprofits, such as American Red Cross, Salvation Army

INCLUSION

○ CERTs are formed and operated locally with input from the needs of the community partners

○ They are modular and scalable

○ **All** citizens are encouraged to join regardless of age, physical condition or any other social factors

○ Everyone can have a duty or responsibility suitable to their wants, interests, and limitations

CERT Volunteer Safety

- CERT Members are taught to:
  - NEVER Self-Deploy
  - NEVER exceed their training level
  - NEVER put themselves in a position where they themselves would need to be rescued
  - NEVER exhaust their own resources
  - ALWAYS works as part of a team

Basic Training and Beyond

- Local CERTs are registered with FEMA as a Ready.Gov emergency volunteer agency

- For example, AC CERT is registered with the County, and NC Department of Public Safety, North Carolina Emergency Management, as part of the State Emergency Response Team

- Basic training for CERT is the National standard 317 class (25 hour basic) and includes first aid, light rescue, disaster psychology and others

- Additional training available for areas that you want to expand your knowledge and training in

- This training is almost ALWAYS free of charge

How about costs to be a CERT member?

○ CERT is minimal to no cost to participate:

○ No dues

○ Free training

○ Free advanced training from the State/Feds, and travel is sometimes reimbursed

○ Basic equipment is usually provided. Purchase only what you would want or need for your needs.

How much time will one need to devote to this organization?

◦ Quarterly Meetings

◦ Full team local operational deployments will be exceedingly rare (1-2 major events a year?)

◦ Single Day Event deployments (typically based upon skill set/specialties)

◦ Occasional opportunities to assist partners with scheduled events, exercises and training throughout the year

◦ Opportunities for state/federal qualifications and specialties

◦ ***Essentially – whatever suits the volunteers needs.***

Is there a CERT team near you?

You can search to see if there is an existing CERT team in your area:

- https://community.fema.gov/PreparednessCommunity/s/cert-find-a-program?language=en_US

If your area does not have a CERT team, there are plenty of resources available to help you to start one

https://community.fema.gov/PreparednessCommunity/s/welcome-to-cert?language=en_US

What else you can do beyond CERT

○ FEMA's Emergency Management Institute has free online, self-paced courses on many different disaster response related subjects.

○ IS-00909 Community Preparedness – Implementing Simple Activities for Everyone is a great place to start.

○ To take courses, students simply need to register for a student identification through the FEMA EMI website at **https://training.fema.gov/student/**

Contact information:

Lee Ann S. Ferguson, PhD

CERT Program Manager & Trainer

Clinical Assistant Professor, Director of Graduate Programs

UMBC Erickson School of Aging Studies

FergusonL@umbc.edu

Andrew Ferguson, FEMA Type III Incident Management Team Liaison Officer Western Branch of North Carolina Emergency Management Ferg@tacdiv.com