



Winter 2005

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CERT, Are We Doing It Right?

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As a newcomer to the CERT arena, I wondered while reviewed the CERT program in Sioux Falls, SD, are we really doing it right?

I was appointed as CERT Coordinator of Sioux Falls Fire Rescue just two short months ago. Since then, I have had the privilege of conducting one CERT drill, participated with CERT members in a city wide Hazmat drill and started a new CERT member class. I have been educated with the fury of a tornado. I, like many other emergency services personnel and the public, was oblivious to the many capabilities and multitude of roles that CERT provides.

CERT members work with public safety on many projects. In our zeal to provide more exposure to both the public and emergency service providers, CERT volunteers are utilized in programs such as our recent "Change Your Clock/Change Your Battery" program. This program involves a door to door campaign designed to increase awareness about fire safety in the home. The CERT volunteers accompany fire personnel into homes in the community to replace batteries and install smoke detectors. New this year we are asking them to participate in our annual "Heroes Behind the Badges" blood drive held just after Christmas time. This is when blood supplies are critically low. We believe this will demonstrate the CERT's extensive participation in community and possibly increase recruitment as well as serving another vital role.

The importance of CERT citizen volunteers was elevated to an unprecedented level with the FEMA call for volunteers following the hurricanes on the east coast. This first of its kind, this call truly emphasized the need for an army of people ready to mobilize at a moments notice to help others during disasters. We experienced a swell of interest and recruiting to the program following this call-up. We are considering adding additional classes this year to accommodate these candidates. High schools and colleges are inquiring about on-campus classes and teams with focus on self protection and facility familiarity. We are also receiving interest from businesses to have their own teams with similar ideals.

College students present a nearly inconceivable prospect for growth in outlying areas. We are optimistic that the seeds planted in these young people may foster a desire to protect their communities through establishment of their own Community Emergency Response Teams. I feel colleges and universities are a largely untapped resource that we must find means to utilize. Recruiting in these circles has proven very difficult, yet imagination is our only constraint. We are able spark some interest through community service requirements of certain institutions and through approaching the likes of science clubs.

In our community, CERT members are divided into teams by apparatus/geographic response areas. Each area has designated leaders who are tasked to provide guidance to team members and give notification in the event of a need. They also have formed a council with the purpose designing training scenarios, aiding in creation of Standard Operating Procedures, and Leader Peer Review, to name a few.

CERT activation is initiated by request of the Incident Command/Senior Officer on Scene per Fire Department SOP or by self activation through CERT Leader call-up during a catastrophic event. The following SOP governing CERT operation in Sioux Falls should shed light on the subject.

Standard Operating Procedures

Sioux Falls Fire Rescue

Effective September 24, 2004

The Best People Doing The Best Job __ Other Responses 804.1

Subject: Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

To propose changes to this policy contact: Division Chief of Prof. Standards

Purpose:

To establish procedures for the activation, notification, and coordination of Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT).

General Instructions

CERT is an integrated part of SFFR, with training and deployment being overseen by the organization. CERT can be deployed for any type of major incident to include:

- Natural disasters
- Technical incidents
- Man-made or terrorist incidents.

Activation

In the event the emergency services within the city are overwhelmed, CERT teams are designed to take immediate action and provide care and support throughout their immediate area. Members of CERT are trained to self activate in their neighborhood. Members work as a team and will conduct operations until relieved by emergency services crews.

If CERT assistance is needed outside of their immediate area, teams can be notified by contacting team leaders/co-leaders utilizing the attached phone roster. The use of radio and television is also acceptable when phone lines are unavailable

Team leaders should be advised of the nature of the emergency, the number of team members requested and the staging location. The team leader should be advised to contact members of the team as needed. (This will take place either in person or by phone).

Notification

Members should be notified of developing weather situations that may require their services. These include weather advisories issued by the National Weather Service.

The EMWIN system may be used for automatic notification.

Coordination

Coordination during a disaster will be at the company officer level. Company officers will communicate with team leaders in person when possible.

When it is not possible to communicate in person, the use of line of site radios provided to each CERT team and engine company will be used.

CERT activities will be relayed to the EOC with periodic updates every 30 minutes, or as determined by unified command.

CERT Capabilities

1. Basic CERT volunteers are trained to perform the following basic operations:

- a. Light Search and Rescue
- b. Fire extinguishment in the incipient phases only
- c. Triage of trauma victims
- d. Set up treatment areas

2. Cert Plus volunteers are trained to perform the following operations:

- a. Set up R & R areas on major fire incidents.
 - 1) Assess SFFR personnel sent to the R & R areas for:
 - a) Blood pressure (if diastolic pressure is over 100 after a 20-minute rest period, that person will remain in R & R or be sent for further medical evaluation).
 - b) Pulse (if the pulse is greater than 100 after a 20-minute rest period, that person will remain in R & R or be sent for further medical evaluation).
 - 2) Document who enters R & R by badge number, name and the time they entered the R & R area.
- b. Crown control on major incidents.
- c. Provide basic first aid for public events.
 - 1) CERT volunteers will be activated in teams of two persons to be on scene at major events.
 - 2) The CERT team will be equipped with first aid fanny packs, a

public access defibrillator, a line of site radio, and a cell phone.

3) If a first aid emergency arises that exceeds the capabilities of the CERT team's training, they will call 9-1-1 to activate the Emergency Response System.

d. Emergency Shelter Operations

1) CERT volunteers can be activated to help set up and operate emergency shelters that may be established for a major incident that requires people to evacuate their homes.

(Sample)

CERT Teams

January 2004

CERT Pagers – Send message to XXXXXXX@xxxxxxxx.xx

John Smith	Team 1	123-4568
Joe Smith	Team 1C	123-1234
Jim Smith	Team 2	113-1111
Jill Smith	Team 3	123-7895 Pager: 123-66547
Jane Smith	Team 4	123-4465

Given everything that has been done and the new ideas we are trying everyday, I believe we are doing it right. In collaboration with CERT members, community leaders, and other CERT organizations, we will forge new frontiers to make our community and the nation more prepared for nearly any adversity we may encounter, and I am ecstatic about being a part of it.

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