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### Wentzville Graduates 4<sup>th</sup> CERT Class

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With the fourth class of volunteer citizens graduating on August 21, the Wentzville CERT program is 48 members strong and growing. Wentzville's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program is a 20 hour disaster preparedness course designed for individuals, business and community organizations in Wentzville and surrounding areas. Spearheaded by Emergency Management Director Phillip Yocum, this program is the Nationally Accepted Federal Standard for community response team training. To understand and get the first-hand knowledge of what tasks a CERT member may have to perform, Mayor Paul Lambi went through the exercises along with the CERT graduates.

"In a real disaster", he said "the potential to prevent injury, loss of life and property in the midst of chaos could rest on the shoulders of these CERT trained citizens." The mayor added, "I know it is vitally important that individual citizens in sufficient numbers in every neighborhood of our community receive the training which will enable them to be the *look to* leaders in their neighborhoods in the event of an emergency."

Empowered by this unique training, people from community organizations, businesses, industry, and City employees can assemble as a CERT, or perform as individual leaders to direct untrained volunteers in the initial phase of a disaster.

CERT members receive 20 hours of initial training in earthquake awareness, disaster fire suppression techniques, disaster medical operations, light search and rescue, as well as team organization and management. CERT training culminates with a disaster simulation exercise and graduation at General Motors and Rotary Park. Students must attend all of the training sessions to receive a CERT graduation certificate. Training is conducted by a trained team of first responders who have completed a CERT Train-the-Trainer course, along with active-duty firefighters, police officers and others with expertise in disaster management.

The ability of community or a business to recover from the devastating effects of an earthquake or other disaster requires the active planning, participation and cooperation of all members of society. The responsibility for preparedness, however, lies with each individual. By encouraging preparedness efforts, hazard identification and mitigation, CERT can minimize the effects of a disaster and facilitate recovery. "Our CERT volunteers are a valuable resource", noted Fire Chief Randy Bornhop, "because they are the first responders to an emergency, and work closely with the EMS, fire and police departments to give them the information needed to proceed in a disaster situation." The benefits of this program are numerous. CERT has increased the overall level of public disaster readiness in Wentzville, and provided emergency skills that people may use in day-to-day emergencies. In addition, the program has enhanced the bond between government organizations and the community.

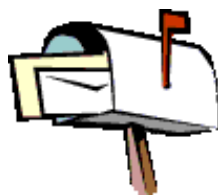


People who go through CERT training have a better understanding of the potential threats to their home, workplace and community and can take the right steps to lessen the effects of these hazards on themselves, their homes or workplace. If a disaster happens that overwhelms local response capability, CERT members can apply the training learned in the classroom and during exercises to give critical support to their family, neighbors or associates in their immediate area until help arrives. When help does arrive, CERT members provide useful information to responders and support their efforts, as directed, at the disaster site. "CERT is the backbone in a disaster situation", said Police Chief Robert Noonan. "On the average in a true disaster, it can take anywhere from 48-72 hours before emergency relief arrives, so CERT plays a vital role in performing triage and passing on very important information to emergency personnel."

CERT training is offered free of charge by the Wentzville Police and Fire Department. In addition to support from the Department of Homeland Security, some companies including General Motors, Walmart and Home Depot donate funds, supplies, time and services.

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