

3.6.3.8 Community Emergency Response Teams



YOUR ORGANIZATION
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES/GUIDELINES

TITLE: Community Emergency Response Teams

SECTION/TOPIC: Disaster Operations

NUMBER: 3.6.3.8

ISSUE DATE:

REVISED DATE:

PREPARED BY:

APPROVED BY:

X

Preparer

X

Approver

These SOPs/SOGs are based on FEMA guidelines FA-197

1.0 POLICY REFERENCE

CFR	
NFPA	
NIMS	

2.0 PURPOSE

This standard operating procedure/guideline addresses integrating and working with CERTs and other emergent volunteer groups during disasters.

The Fire Department recognizes the need to be able to incorporate and utilize volunteer help when available. Over the past several years, volunteer programs have been on the rise as more and more citizens have stepped forward to fill our nation's call to volunteerism. The City Fire Department has taken a pro-active stance in this area by training citizens to be part of a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). Utilizing spontaneous or activated volunteers can supplement manpower and increase overall scene effectiveness. Therefore, the purposes of this SOG are:

To establish guidelines for utilizing CERT Volunteers during disaster and emergency situations.

To establish an understanding of the capabilities and limitations of CERT Volunteers.

To establish an understanding of the CERT Tier system.

To establish a procedure for injury or incident reporting, involving CERT Volunteers.

3.0 SCOPE

This SOP/SOG pertains to all personnel in this organization.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

These definitions are pertinent to this SOP/SOG.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) – A CERT is an organization of volunteer emergency workers who have received specific training in basic disaster response skills, and who agree to supplement existing emergency responders in the event of a major disaster.

CERT Member - A member of the City's Community Emergency Response Team. CERT members have received basic training from CFD personnel in the areas of disaster preparedness, fire suppression, first aid, light search and rescue, team building, and the incident management system. CERT members at the Tier Two or Tier Three level have undergone a background check and have registered as City Volunteers. When activated, they are under the direction of the Fire Department and are covered by the City's liability insurance and workers compensation program.

Tier System – City's CERT program consists of three Tiers: One, Two, and Three.

Tier One – This designation is given to those citizens that have attended the initial CERT training, and are under 18 years of age, or are over 18 but chose not to be involved as a member of CERT. This level is also known as the "Awareness Level." Citizens at the Awareness Level are given a Certificate of Participation, but are not given a CERT Helmet, Vest, or ID. They are not registered City Volunteers. **Note:** This designation was also given to citizens who attended classes prior to January 2004, but either did not respond to the new Tier System, or did respond but chose Tier One. Those that did not respond may still have a helmet, vest, and/or outdated ID tag. These individuals are not current members of CERT or volunteers with the City.

Tier Two – This designation is given to those citizens that attended the initial CERT training, are over 18 years of age, and have chosen to become a member of CERT. This designation is also known as the "Neighborhood Response Level" as these members may assist, at their own discretion, their neighbors during disasters or emergencies. These members are registered volunteers with the City.

Tier Three – This designation is given to those citizens that attended the initial CERT training, are over 18 years of age, and chose to become a member of CERT at a more advanced level. This designation is also known as the "Community Response Level" as these members may be contacted via the City Police Department's Auto-Dialer to assist their

community during a disaster. Tier Three members may also assist their neighbors, at their own discretion, during disasters or emergencies. These members are registered volunteers with the City.

Emergency – Any situation that occurs suddenly or unexpectedly, and creates an urgent need for action that results in a 911 response.

Disaster – Any situation of widespread destruction, or of a large enough magnitude to overwhelm the Fire Department’s ability to handle it in a given amount of time. This may or may not be an officially declared disaster during the initial response.

Spontaneous Volunteer – Any individual who spontaneously provides assistance during a disaster or emergency without any expectation to do so placed on them by any entity. These individuals may or may not possess the training, equipment, or physical or psychological ability to handle the tasks they are undertaking. These volunteers may or may not be members of City’s CERT Program.

Activated Volunteer – A volunteer that has been requested by the Fire Department to assist in an emergency or disaster operation. With CERT, this can only be a current Tier Two or Three member. For Tier Two, this would be a direct verbal request. For Tier Three, this can either be through a direct verbal request or through the use of the City Police Department’s Auto-dialer. An activated volunteer must be supervised by the requesting agency. Activated CERT volunteers are covered under the City’s liability insurance and workers compensation program.

5.0 PROCEDURES/GUIDELINES & INFORMATION

5.1 Integrating and Working with CERTs and other Emergent Volunteer Groups during Disasters:

POLICY

The incorporation of CERT member(s) into an emergency scene will be at the discretion of the Company Officer.

The incorporation of CERT member(s) into a disaster situation will be at the discretion of the Company Officer, or the Fire and/or EOC Chief.

Fire Department personnel must directly supervise any CERT member incorporated into an emergency or disaster scene.

Any Company Officer may refuse to authorize the participation of a CERT member in emergency operations for good cause.

Only CERT members with appropriate ID can be activated as a City Volunteer. CERT members without proper ID or CERT members from other jurisdictions may be utilized, but only as a spontaneous volunteer. (See Definitions for clarification of these roles.)

Only CERT members who are currently recognized at the “Tier Two” or “Tier Three” level may be incorporated into an emergency or disaster scene as an activated City Volunteer. This ID must be presented to the Company Officer and must not be expired. Any CERT ID that does not display the designation of Tier Two or Tier Three shall not be accepted as a current/valid CERT ID.

Fire Department personnel overseeing the activity of any volunteer need to ensure that the volunteer is utilizing safety equipment and following proper safety procedures. CERT members are issued gloves, helmets, goggles, and safety vests and should use these during emergency or disaster operations. Spontaneous volunteers may or may not possess such equipment, and should be provided this equipment if available.

PROCEDURES

Utilizing Spontaneous Volunteers

Upon arrival at an emergency scene or disaster site, a Company Officer may find CERT members and other citizens engaged in emergency activities as spontaneous volunteers. Depending on the scope of the incident, the Company Officer may wish to maintain the operation of those volunteers who are performing critical functions, or that can be utilized in other capacities. This will require a rapid size-up by the Company Officer to ascertain the scope of the situation, the degree of volunteer assistance needed, the type of volunteer, and any hazards that may affect the safety of the volunteer(s). If the volunteer(s) is with CERT, a CAN report should be requested. Following the CAN report, the Company Officer must either “disengage” the CERT member(s) and/or other spontaneous volunteers, or give them instructions on how they can continue to assist. **Note:** Engaging a CERT member in an operation activates them as a City Volunteer (see “Utilizing Activated Volunteers”). Disengaging them means that they are to cease their involvement in the operation and are not to be considered “activated.”

Activated volunteers need to have specific instructions and be closely supervised. They must not be given any task that is beyond their scope of training or mental and/or physical ability to perform.

Utilizing Activated Volunteers

An activated CERT member is under the direct supervision of a Fire Department Supervisor or designee. This either came about as a direct verbal request from a Company Officer or his/her designee, or through a request placed through the City Police Department’s Auto-Dialer. The decision to utilize the auto-dialer system is done at the discretion of the Fire and/or EOC Chief. Utilizing the auto-dialer to activate Tier Three CERT members will also be accompanied by a call-out of Fire

Department members to supervise the activated volunteers.

Activated CERT members, as City Volunteers, can be utilized as part of a fire crew to assist with basic scene or supportive functions including:

- Basic first-aid
- Triage of victims
- Extinguishment of small incipient phase fires utilizing makeshift aids or fire extinguishers. (**Note:** No interior firefighting is allowed, and CERT members should not be in a position where smoke inhalation or heat endangers their safety.)
- Light Search and Rescue to include cribbing, leveraging, and removal of patients from danger.
- Setting up treatment, rehab, or similar sectors.
- Maintaining accountability for fellow CERT members
- Supervising CERT sectors or groups.
- Any other operation required to remedy a given scenario that does not directly endanger the CERT member or move outside of his or her scope of practice.

Note: Many members of CERT have skills beyond what is taught through the CERT program (e.g., physicians and other health professionals, heavy equipment operators, etc.). While these skills may be helpful during an emergency or disaster, they are outside of the CERT scope-of-practice and are not authorized activities as a CERT volunteer.

Accountability

Tier Two and Three CERT members have Accountability Tags. These should be collected prior to sending the CERT member into a hazard area. The CERT member should then collect their Accountability Tag upon leaving the hazard area. Accountability may be kept by the IC (Fire Department member supervising CERT operations), or by a designated Accountability Officer assigned by the IC.

MERT

The Monsoon Emergency Response Team (MERT) program provides additional training to Tier Two and Three CERT members. This training encompasses monsoon weather training taught by the National Weather Service, electrical emergencies training taught by a utility company, and traffic control taught by the City Police Department. Members who complete this training may assist the Fire Department with traffic control at a power line call or other call requiring traffic control. (**Note:** Traffic control is not permitted within an intersection.)

Documentation

Any time a CERT member is activated, information regarding the extent of activation needs to be documented. On an emergency, this may simply be including this information into the ARI report narrative. On an EMS call, this should also be noted on the encounter form. This information should include:

- Name of CERT member and ID # if available.
- Tier Level.
- Actions taken prior to arrival of FD.
- Actions assigned after arrival of FD.
- Any outcomes, positive or negative, including injuries sustained.

Once the scenario is resolved, the supervising FD member should deactivate the CERT member.

CERT members are not permitted to carry or possess any weapons while undertaking activities as a CERT member.

Any activated CERT member that suffers an injury while performing an assigned task must immediately, without delay or considerable loss of time, report any injury incurred while assisting the City Fire Department. They also must understand that the failure to immediately report such injury will jeopardize their ability to receive workers compensation benefits, and that any recovery for such injury is specifically and expressly limited to that available under the City's workers compensation insurance. (See FD Form xx, City Community Emergency Response Team Program Certification of Understanding and Hold Harmless Agreement.)

Any injury to a CERT member under the supervision of CFD should be reported in accordance with SOG xxx

FORMS AND EXHIBITS

Approved Accountability Tag
Approved CERT Tier Two ID
Approved CERT Tier Three ID
Approved MERT ID