



POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL



What is CERT?

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program educates families and individuals about preparing for disasters or hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. Using their training CERT members can assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an incident until professional emergency responders and critical resources arrive.

CERT members promote emergency preparedness, give critical support to first responders in emergencies, provide immediate assistance to victims, collect disaster information to support first responder efforts and provide help in the period immediately following a major emergency or disaster. CERT enables individuals to help their families and neighbors prepare, respond and recover within their own neighborhood.



A Brief History of CERT

Throughout history when disaster struck, people have always stepped in to help their neighbors and strangers alike to overcome extreme situations. Millions of Americans volunteered during World War II to become civil defense workers trained to be ready should the war impact their community. After WWII civil defense skills were transferred toward threats created by disasters - most often natural disasters such as hurricanes and floods. Over time, those skills began to erode and the nation's inherent capability for self-reliance in emergencies was diminished by the lack of training and example.

The current Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) concept was developed and implemented by the City of Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) in 1985 as a result of knowledge gained from the catastrophic Mexico City earthquake. After a series of additional disasters including earthquakes, fires, and landslides, LAFD refined their concept even further. Since September 11, 2001, even greater importance has been placed on a prepared citizenry trained to keep our communities safe.

Every community is different and CERT programs vary from one community to another based on the needs and resources available. Basic CERT programs deploy within or close to their neighborhoods or businesses. Some localities may deploy CERTs beyond their neighborhood provided there has been additional locality specific training and in compliance with incident command structures that encourages functioning as a team.



How Do I Get Involved?

Serve DC has an open entry policy. Applications are accepted from individuals throughout the city. In addition to the knowledge gained from CERT training, by studying together, volunteer trainees will develop the important skills necessary to work as a cohesive team. The skills and knowledge gained in CERT training will serve you well in an emergency situation and your example may serve to encourage your neighbors or co-workers to become members of a CERT. You may also qualify to serve in one of several designated volunteer jobs assisting at Serve DC/The Mayor's Office on Volunteerism.



To be a CERT volunteer you must have completed the following:

- Be a minimum of 18 years of age.
- Successfully complete the DHS standardized training program.
- Participate in fire suppression training.
- Build and demonstrate a personal 72 hour kit.
- Comply with the rules and policies set forth by Serve DC/ The Mayor's Office on Volunteerism.
- Complete IS 100, IS 200 and IS 700.
- Submit and pass a basic county background check.
- Complete and sign the Volunteer Contract with Serve DC/ The Mayor's Office on Volunteerism.
- Participate in the final class drill and written exam.
- Volunteers have six (6) months from the end of the training program to complete all requirements.



Active CERT Volunteer Responsibilities

- Maintain yourself and your own household in a state of readiness so that you can effectively respond to events in your neighborhood and serve as an example to others.
- Attend at least 4 hours of approved training each year.
- Maintain current personal profile data.
- Maintain personal and organizational equipment in good condition.
- Participate in at least one drill every two years.
- Submit an updated background check form 30 days prior to the expiration of your CERT ID card.

Only members who have been issued an identification card are eligible for deployment during and following a major emergency or disaster. There will be no exceptions to this policy.



Serve DC CERT Program Leadership

The CERT Team will meet 2 times per year to conduct business meetings, unless convened for emergency purposes. In which notices will be delivered by phone or email.

Policies & Procedures:

1. CERT teams shall promote and comply with the policies, procedures and operating philosophies of Serve DC/The Mayor's Office on Volunteerism.
2. CERT trained individuals and/or teams, while serving or representing CERT, shall operate within the parameters of their CERT training.
3. CERT trained individuals and/or teams, while serving or representing CERT, shall not self-deploy.
4. CERT volunteers are responsible for maintaining all CERT equipment and resources in clean and operable condition. All equipment shall be used strictly in a manner consistent with their training, and shall not be transferred, sold or disposed of without prior authorization from the Director/Chief Service Officer with Serve DC/ The Mayor's Office on Volunteerism.
5. Any request by another locality, other counties, or another state, to Serve DC for CERT resources (whether for disaster, emergency, special event, and/or training, etc.) shall be authorized and coordinated through Serve DC/The Mayor's Office on Volunteerism. Deployment of CERT-trained individuals and/or teams outside of the District, while serving or representing CERT, shall be based solely on mission-specific tasks.
6. CERT volunteers will provide timely notification of changes in contact information (address, email, phone, etc.) to the CERT Program Manager, Volunteer Engagement Director or Director/Chief Service Officer with Serve DC/ The Mayor's Office on Volunteerism.
7. CERT volunteers must display their CERT ID cards at all times while performing duties in any official CERT capacity.
8. CERT volunteers are individually responsible for communicating their own personal limitations.
9. The CERT Program Manager or Incident Commander must be notified as soon as possible of any injury, regardless of whether it requires medical attention. An investigation of the incident will be conducted to determine if safety procedures were adequate, communicated clearly, and complied with at the time of incident.
10. CERT teams cannot allow any individual who is not an active CERT volunteer to be included in official CERT deployments. This does not exclude spontaneous volunteers from being utilized for non-CERT tasks.
11. Failure of CERT volunteers or teams to comply with the policies and procedures as stated may result in their immediate termination from the Serve DC/ The Mayor's Office on Volunteerism CERT Program.
12. Any illegal or improper conduct on the part of any member may be cause for termination from the program. The decision of the Director/Chief Service Officer with Serve DC/ The Mayor's Office on Volunteerism will be final.

Failure to comply with these policies and procedures could endanger the public, CERT volunteers, and emergency responders; could expose Serve DC/ The Mayor's Office on Volunteerism to liability; could result in the loss of resources needed to respond to emergency events; and could jeopardize the eligibility of Serve DC/ The Mayor's Office on Volunteerism to receive federal and state funding needed to support the CERT program. When activated, CERT volunteers and teams become part of the District's Emergency Management System.

Activation Policies and Procedures

CERT may be placed on 'standby' or 'active' duty by the Director/Chief Service Officer with Serve DC/ The Mayor's Office on Volunteerism. The CERT Manager/Leadership Chair (or designee) is notified of the need to activate, and then the 'call out' protocol is implemented. This may be in the form of text message, email, phone, social media posting, and/or hand-held radio.

CERT Activation Process:

The Team Leader should report the following information to Director/Chief Service Officer with Serve DC/ The Mayor's Office on Volunteerism, Emergency Management and/or the EOC as soon as possible.

Date:

Time:

Team Name:

Location of Response Area:

Name of Team Leader:

Contact information:

General overview/state of the response area:

- Damage/hazards (flooding, debris, power lines, etc.):
- Number of victims:
 - How many "Red" (critical):
 - Number of fatalities:
- Location of greatest need:
- Obstacles to ingress or egress.
- Number of CERT volunteers:
- Greatest immediate need of the CERT team:
- Roster of CERT volunteers:

CERT Roles in Activation (as needed)

Team Leader

Safety Officer

- Develop, deliver, and enforce a safety plan.

Scribe

- Maintain records and written communications for members.

Logistics Leader

- Provide facilities, services, and materials in support of the incident, and assist the Team Leader as necessary.
- Maintain inventory and resource tracking.

Communications Officer

- Develop, deliver, and maintain a Communications Plan.

CERT Manager Leader Guidance

- Any CERT volunteer may be Team Leader. It is imperative that each CERT volunteer remain familiar with the basics of being Team Leader.
- Think SAFETY!
- If professional responders may be delayed, ensure that it is safe for CERT to activate.
- Announce the location of a CERT staging area.
- The Team Leader will designate someone to call HSEMA with the information from the CERT Activation Form as soon as possible.
- Divide team into job functions as needed and as time and resources allow. Decide what your priority is and how to do the greatest good for the greatest number.
- Give your Team instructions; remind them to return to you for reassignment upon completion of their task. **SAFETY FIRST!**

Your priorities are ALWAYS:

- Life Safety
- Incident Stabilization
- Property/Environment Conservation

Team functions can be combined; you will need to be flexible to handle situations as they arise. Improvise, adapt and overcome. A map can be very useful.

This glossary is a helpful guide of commonly used abbreviations in the District Government Emergency Services System.

9-1-1: The emergency number to call in the District

ARC: American Red Cross

ARES: Amateur Radio Emergency Service

CERT: Community Emergency Response Team

EM: Emergency Management

EMS: Emergency Medical Services

EOC: Emergency Operations Center

HSEMA: Homeland Security Emergency Management Agency

FEMA: Federal Emergency Management Agency

ICS: Incident Command System

MRC: Medical Reserve Corps

NIMS: National Incident Management System

PDA: Preliminary Damage Assessment

PPE: Personal protective equipment

RACES: Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services

RPM: Respirations, pulse, mental status; used in triage

SAR: Search and Rescue

START: Simple Triage and Rapid Treatment

VIPS: Volunteers in Police Service

VOAD: Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster

Acknowledgement of Receipt

I hereby acknowledge receipt of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Policy and Procedures Manual for Serve DC/ The Mayor's Office on Volunteerism.

Name: _____

(Please Print)

Signature: _____ Date: _____