# NYC CERT PROGRAM FACT SHEET

*The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program is a federal program designed to train people to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergency situations in their communities. When emergencies occur, CERT members can provide immediate assistance to their neighbors until emergency authorities arrive. CERT members can further use their training to inform, educate, and train their fellow neighbors on disaster preparedness that will help improve the safety of their community.*

## WHY YOUR COMMUNITY NEEDS A CERT

The mission of the New York City Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program is to train neighborhood and community-based volunteer teams that will:
  • inform, educate, and train their neighbors on disaster preparedness, especially such vulnerable populations as seniors, the non-English speakers and individuals with disabilities;
  • assist public safety agencies and local community boards with public events;
  • respond to and support emergency personnel during locally occurring disasters upon their arrival and request;
  • assist agencies in managing spontaneous volunteers at a disaster site.

While some of the CERT training is designed to prepare individuals and their teams to engage in disaster response, **the primary role of CERT teams in New York City is disaster preparedness - on a personal level, as well as on a neighborhood level.**

Fortunately, large-scale disasters that would involve a consistent CERT response are rare. Therefore, it is **very** important that team members understand that the basic response skills gained during the training are, in fact, a very small part of what a team will focus on post-training. Much of a team's time will instead be spent on preparedness for themselves, their families, and their communities. Examples of these activities include:
  • Distribution of the *Ready New York* household preparedness guides to local individuals, families, and businesses. Arranging for groups to receive the *Ready New York* presentations.
  • Educating the community on emergency preparedness, in particular the vulnerable populations, such as the non-English speaking communities, seniors and those with disabilities.
  • Building relationships within the community (i.e., local business merchants, local firehouses and police precincts) to share information, determine ways to offer CERT support and utilize resources.
  • Planning for CERT team continuity, sustainability, and future leadership. Creating various sections of the Team to deal with team communications, training, outreach, education, fund-raising, etc.

## CERTTRANIING

CERT classes will be conducted by a combination of representatives from the Fire Department of New York City (FDNY), New York City Police Department (NYPD), New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and the American Red Cross in Greater New York (ARC/GNY).

*A Lead Instructor from FDNY will be facilitating the class for the duration of the training and specialist Topic instructors will come each week to teach their respective class.*

  • CERT Training is a grant funded program through the Department of Homeland Security.
  • CERT requires a strong commitment from its participants.
  • **Each participant must undergo a confidential criminal hiotory check, completed Liy OEM.**

**For more information:**
**www.nyc.gov/cert**

- Training is held once a week for 11 weeks. Train is only held on weeknights and each class runs between 2.5 - 3 hours. Teams will designate which day of the week they can train based on the training facility's availability. The format for training includes both a lecture style and hands-on training. All training materials are included in this 11-week program.
- All course materials and equipment are provided and there is no fee for participation.
- Refreshments are not provided. Any costs for refreshments are the responsibility of the participants.

## Graduation
- Upon successful completion of the CERT training, participants will receive a Certificate of Completion and
  an official New York City CERT kit that includes a hard hat, CERT vest, flashlight, gloves, goggles.
- Training includes topics such as Fire Safety, Light Search & Rescue, Terrorism Awareness, Disaster Medical Operations, Urban Environment, Terrorism, Traffic Control, as well as Disaster Mental Health.
- Towards the end of the 11 week training, each team elects a Team Chief and Deputy Chief that will help organize the team and keep communication with OEM post-training.

## Class Participation
- CERT participants are expected to attend every training class.
- Participants who are unable to attend a class can "make up" the class by attending the same class offered in another location (in another borough on another night) or by working with their instructors to schedule a make up class. A copy of the master training schedule and instructions on how participants can make arrangements to attend a "make-up" class will be available before training.
- Participants who miss and do not make up a CERT class will <u>not</u> graduate or receive a Certificate of Completion and CERT kit.

## Post-Training
- Teams are given the tools to help get themselves organized. Citizens for NYC provides post-training workshops which address key steps in CERT team building and structuring and neighborhood organization.
- Teams are responsible for pre-designating the areas in which they will cover within their Community Board boundaries.
- Teams are self-deploying when emergencies happen within their Community Boards. All other incidents involve activation from the NYC OEM to the elected Team Chief.

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**COMMUNITY BOARD ROLE**

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## The primary responsibilities of the Community Board prior to the start of CERT training are:
  - o    Recruit participants who live within their Community Board boundaries and who may belong to various neighborhood organizations.
  - o    Start a database with names and contact information.
    - o   OEM will need to collect these names one week before training begins.
  - o    Identify and secure an appropriate space for training.

*A member of the OEM CERT Program Team may be available to present information about the CERT Program at Community Board meetings, if given adequate notice.*

## Recruiting
- Community Boards should cast a wide net in recruiting individuals or groups from their neighborhood or community. Consider including organizations whose members have a variety of backgrounds from diverse nationalities, fluent in different languages, having specific personal and/or professional skills or certifications.
- If groups are interested in participating, it is the Community Board's responsibility to recruit participants from groups in all neighborhoods within the Community District for the CERT training. Ideally, each community group will provide 8 to 10 participants to serve on the CERT Team.
- The Community Board is expected to recruit **a minimum of 30 and maximum of 40 participants.**
- Participants must be at least 18 years of age, but otherwise the program is open to any member of your community who can commit to the training.

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Please keep in mind that if the participants have other significant emergency functions, such as volunteer ambulance or fire, or retired police officer, they will not be able to support CERT during emergencies because they will serve their primary function.

**Training Location**
Each Community Board is responsible for identifying, securing, and serving as liaison to an appropriate location for these training sessions. As mentioned, training sessions are held once a week in each respective borough.
Guidelines for the ideal CERT training space:
- A facility with:
  - ✓ A well-lit room with an adequate supply of chairs and tables.
  - ✓ Space to set up a screen (for projecting PowerPoint slide images) and electrical outlets for plugging in a laptop and projector.
  - ✓ Access to an outdoor space (such as a parking lot or park) suitable for conducting the demonstration of use of fire extinguishers. This demonstration involves lighting a fire in special fire pan and then allowing each CERT participant the chance to put out the fire with an extinguisher.
  - ✓ It is imperative that a secure location be identified for storage of the CERT training equipment. The place must be locked or secured when the items are not in use and must be accessible in the evenings for classes. For an idea of the volume of storage space needed, the equipment is stored in a 4' x 3' rolling case and includes fire extinguishers, CPR mannequin, first aid materials, a blanket, wood for cribbing, and administrative material. Also there will be a few loose items that cannot fit in the case, needing storage.
  - ✓ With the exception of participant manuals which are kept by the participants, all equipment and materials are the property of OEM and will be collected at the conclusion of the training.
  - ✓ Equipment will be delivered either the week before or the week of the first classes. The OEM CERT Program Team will coordinate with a designated CERT Liaison a time for this delivery including signing off on receipt of the equipment indicating acceptance of responsibility for returning the equipment at the conclusion of the training.
  - ✓ To avoid confusion, the training location must remain constant throughout the training course.
  - ✓ Sessions will likely be scheduled from 6:30 pm until 9:30 pm (sometimes 7:00 pm - 10:00 pm). Most instructors will want access to the room at least 15 minutes prior to the start time.

> *The OEM CERT Program Team will need to conduct a walk-through of the proposed training location well in advance of the start of training.*