



National NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2 – Issue 1

Guam CERT Program Targets Youths



Students who completed the CERT Basic Training Course offered through Guam University's AmeriCorps program pose for a photo last December.

Less than a month after unveiling a newly renovated emergency operations center, Guam Homeland Security and Citizen Corps Program conducted two days of CERT training in December 2008 for an audience it hopes will take advantage of the facility's resources for years to come – the island's youth. A group of about 40 students from the University of Guam and various high schools participated in an intensive version of the CERT Basic Training Course.

(Continued on page 3)

CERT in Action! Stories Featured on the CERT Website

Fires in California? Power outages in Miami? Tornadoes in Kansas? Hurricanes in Florida? How have CERTs assisted in these and other emergencies around the country? Take a look at CERT in Action! at the CERT website, <http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/certinaction.shtm>. You'll find stories about the real value of CERTs in real emergencies in communities all over the country, assisting neighbors who have lost their homes, directing traffic during a power outage, documenting evacuees from an apartment building fire, and more. New CERT in Action! stories are posted on the website monthly, and all past stories are archived for easy access.

(Continued on page 4)

IN THIS ISSUE

GUAM GROWS CERT PROGRAM	1
CERT IN ACTION! STORIES ON CERT WEBSITE	1
HOLDEN CERT RALLIES DURING FIRST EMERGENCY RESPONSE	2
2009 NATIONAL COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS CONFERENCE	4
ASTORIA CERT CHECKS IN ON JEWELL RESIDENTS	5
WALTON CO CERT RECOGNIZED FOR HOUSE FIRE REPOSE	6
NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL PROGRAM OFFICE	7
CERT PROGRAM INTERVIEWS	
Layton City, UT CERT	7
Butler County, KS CERT	8
FAQs	9
HOW TO SUBMIT A STORY	9

<http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/>



NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS DIRECTORATE



Holden, MA CERT Members Convert Senior Center Into Shelter During Program's First Emergency Response



Holden CERT member Mike Taylor works in the kitchen at the Holden senior center, which was converted into a shelter during a winter storm in Holden, MA, last December.

When Holden, MA CERT Coordinator Rebecca Evanoff became mentally and physically drained from working 12-hour days at the makeshift shelter in Holden's senior center, a fellow CERT member told Evanoff to go home and sleep, and assured her that the situation was in able hands.

The anecdote summarizes the Holden CERT's response during a winter ice storm that displaced Worcester County residents for 10 days in December 2008: Members were dedicated to doing the greatest good for the greatest number, all the while keeping tabs on the well-being of their fellow volunteers.

When Holden Fire Chief Jack Chandler III activated area CERT volunteers the night that the ice storm hit, Evanoff's team converted the senior center into a shelter within the hour. Team members created a sign-in sheet and organized themselves into shifts, assigning supervisors and specific tasks.

"I think they rallied well," Evanoff said of her 10-member team's first emergency response. "We worked through all of the issues. We definitely did the looking out for each other."

The team also looked out for the residents of the shelter, which housed 17 people on the first night and up to 70 on subsequent nights. To minimize the residents' psychological distress, Evanoff's team members drew upon the lessons they had learned from JoAnn Griffin, a licensed social worker and president of the Central Massachusetts Disaster Animal Response Team. Evanoff had invited Griffin to teach the Disaster Psychology lesson of the CERT Basic Training Course. A puppy that happened to be in the shelter with another resident helped an anxious pregnant woman make it through the first night, while a therapy dog – with painted nails, no less – was brought in later.

The first morning after the shelter opened, Holden CERT members did something that wasn't covered in their training: They cooked egg sandwiches for 200 people, including police, fire, and emergency services personnel.

"We did a really good job working on the fly," said Evanoff, whose team also learned how to change oxygen tanks for an elderly resident.

When it became clear that the shelter would be open for an extended period of time, Holden CERT members put together hygiene kits, assisted with well-being checks, directed unaffiliated volunteers, and provided updates to residents. While people in the shelter passed the time chatting with former strangers, playing poker and board games, and watching television, Evanoff's team was coordinating meals and arranging for shuttles to take residents to the local high school to shower.

Area residents and officials pitched in at the shelter, bringing supplies, making dinner, and cleaning. One of the biggest logistical challenges, according to Evanoff, was managing this outpouring of support. While Evanoff attended the daily status meeting at the emergency operations center, she said it was difficult to manage such a large number of volunteers and keep track of what supplies the shelter needed. Evanoff and the other local CERT coordinators have since begun discussing ways to remedy the problem.

By the time the shelter closed more than a week after it opened, Holden CERT members had volunteered more than 600 hours. The support proved invaluable to the Holden Fire Department, which was busy pumping flooded basements,

(Continued on page 3)

Guam Targets Youths in Effort to Grow CERT Program *(Continued from page 1)*

“It brings to the participants more appreciation for what emergency is all about,” said Sgt. James Buccat of the Guam Police Department, one of the instructors for the course. “They took a tour and got to see people working, and they really got an appreciation for what we do. It would be exciting if we were able to get these folks to volunteer to come out and support our first responders.”

The training was offered through the University’s Ameri-Corps program, which is composed of about 70 college and high school students. The students in the program who did not participate in the December training took the course in late January.

“If there’s an event, we’ll have teams set up in hotels that can take care of people.”
– Sgt. James Buccat

“This class in particular enjoyed the practical portion the most and would like to have more hands-on activities conducted,” said Guam Citizen Corps/CERT Program Coordinator Edilyn Terlaje. “Overall, they enjoyed the class.”

Buccat said that, while Guam doesn’t have the facility to conduct a full-fledged disaster simulation, he hopes to generate more interest in the program by establishing a camp for children 12 and under that could introduce youngsters to emergency preparedness.

There has been a strong emphasis on volunteerism in Guam since the first CERT training was offered in 2003. Given the long amount of time it could take Federal disaster aid to reach the island, Buccat said, it is important that Guam’s citizens be prepared to fend for themselves in the event of a major catastrophe, such as a typhoon or terrorist attack.

CERT classes are generally offered once a month, and Terlaje estimates that 500 to 600 Guam residents have received CERT training since 2003. Some classes have consisted entirely of employees of the tourism-oriented island’s large hotel industry.

“If there’s an event, we’ll have teams set up in hotels that



Two students participate in a fire safety exercise during a two-day training program in Guam in December 2008.

can take care of people,” Buccat said.

Guam is revising its activation plan for CERT members, which Buccat hopes will allow the operations center to make better use of volunteers depending on their level of training. For future emergencies, some teams might be asked to perform pre-disaster tasks, while others might be called upon to help out afterward. Meanwhile, the message remains the same. “What I really want to push to the participants is the importance of being prepared,” Buccat said.

Holden, MA CERT Rallies During Its First Emergency Response

(Continued from page 2)

clearing downed wires, and putting out fires.

“I give the Fire Chief a whole lot of credit,” Evanoff said. “He basically activated us, said, ‘Here you go,’ and we did it. He knew if I needed something, or if anyone else on the team needed something, we’d call.”

Evanoff also knows that the next time she desperately needs some sleep, her team won’t hesitate to tell her.

Save the Date! 2009 National Conference on Community Preparedness Comes to Arlington, VA, August 9-12

The 2009 National Conference on Community Preparedness: The Power of Citizen Corps is being hosted by FEMA's Community Preparedness Division on August 9-12, 2009, at the Hyatt Crystal City Hotel in Arlington, VA. The conference is open to all who are interested in making their communities safer, stronger, and better prepared for all types of hazards. It will bring together approximately 600 state and local elected officials, emergency management, fire and police services, public health and emergency medical services, non-governmental organizations, private business and industry, advocacy groups, and members of the public. The conference is a great time to meet fellow CERT activists from across the country

and share your experiences with them.

The keynote speaker at the conference is Amanda Ripley. Ms. Ripley will discuss her book, "The Unthinkable: Who Survives When Disaster Strikes – and Why," which is the first mass-market publication to explain how the brain works during disasters.

During the conference, you'll have an opportunity to attend break-out sessions on current innovations and issues from Citizen Corps, CERT, and other partner programs from around the country. In conjunction with the conference program, there will also be an all-CERT afternoon on Wednesday, August 12, featuring new ideas on CERT operations and deployment, cross-cultural

training, and latest developments in CERT training.

On Wednesday and Thursday, there will also be a series of specialized training and information workshops. There are no additional fees to attend any of the specialized workshops, but space in these workshops is limited and will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis.

For details on the conference and the specialized workshops and information about how to register for the conference, please go to <http://www.iaem.com/NCCP2009.htm>.

See you there!

CERT in Action! Stories Featured on the CERT Website *(Continued from page 1)*

We want to hear from local CERT Programs about how teams have been used in actual emergencies. If you're a local CERT Program Coordinator and have a CERT in Action! story to share, please send it to cert@dhs.gov. Everyone benefits from shared information!

The CERT in Action! story you submit should be no longer than four paragraphs describing how the CERT(s) were used during the activation, the types of activities they performed, number of team members activated, and any challenges and/or successes experienced during the activation. Photos are always welcome. If you do send a photo, please confirm that the people in the picture approve of the use of their image and describe the activity they are performing.



CERT members work at the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials in Eugene, OR, in July 2008

Also, please include the following information in your e-mail when submitting your story:

- Contact name
- E-mail address
- Phone number
- City, State
- Event/activity
- Date(s)

It is the policy of the CERT Program Office to verify all submissions. You may also be asked to submit additional information for the story.

We look forward to your stories, and thank you in advance for sharing your CERT in Action! experiences!

Astoria, OR CERT Helps Jewell Residents After Storm



A CERT member clears a tree branch off a car following a storm in Clatsop County, OR, last December.

Record snowfall in late December 2008 produced floods and mudslides that left thousands of residents of Clatsop County, OR, without power and stranded in their homes. Two local CERTs, including a team from Astoria, were activated to conduct door-to-door checks of residences in the especially hard-hit and sparsely populated logging community of Jewell.

“We were asked to conduct welfare checks because we heard stories of people running out of gas for generators and burning furniture for heat,” Astoria CERT Coordinator Dorothy Davidson said.

Davidson’s CERT teamed with the CERT from Lewis & Clark, an unincorporated area of Clatsop County. At the Nehalem Valley Community Church in nearby Seaside, which served as the emergency operations center, the two CERTs mapped out a strategy with input from Jewell’s Fire Chief. The Lewis & Clark CERT, which brought a couple of all-terrain vehicles, was assigned to check on homes in the more remote areas. Within 24 hours, the two teams had contacted 90 percent of the homes targeted, though some residences were harder to reach than others.

Davidson recalled one particularly harrowing trip up an icy road with her husband, Bill, who is also an Astoria CERT coordinator. The man who lived in a trailer at the top of the hill requested gas for his generator and food for him and his dog. So, the Davidsons maneuvered their way back down the hill, picked up the necessary supplies, and returned.

While Davidson said that the donated radios her team used didn’t work as well as they could have, she was pleased with the results of the cooperative relief effort in Jewell. “It was our first experience working with a team that we hadn’t trained with and seeing how our communications would be,” Davidson said. “We considered it to be very successful that we were able to do what we did and that we did it in a timely manner.”

Most of the Astoria and Lewis & Clark CERT members returned home after one day, but two remained in Jewell to help a large number of other volunteers organize the operations center and deliver firewood over the next few days.

For the Astoria CERT Program, which the Davidsons launched in April 2007, the trip to Jewell marked its second response to a winter emergency in two years. A storm in December 2007 produced wind gusts of more than 100 mph and caused major damage in the area. Ten members of the Astoria CERT helped conduct the initial damage assessment following that storm.

“I think that showed us that, yes, CERTs can be successful,” said Davidson, who, along with her husband, has more than 30 years of experience in the fire service. Today, the Astoria CERT boasts 23 members, most of whom have ham radio licenses and have been certified in first aid and CPR. “They’re an enthusiastic group,” she said.



CERT members pose outside the Nehalem Valley Community Church, which served as the emergency operations center.

Three Walton County, FL CERT Members Recognized for House Fire Response Last November

When Walton County CERT graduates Dale Campbell, Jerry Stinson, and Bob Wadlington travel to Tallahassee, FL, this year to receive an award from Florida Gov. Charlie Crist, they might tell the governor that, far from anything extraordinary, they had done only as they had been trained to do when they responded to a house fire in their north-west Florida community in November 2008.

What the trio of volunteers did, however, helped save a house and possibly more. After Campbell, Stinson, and Wadlington arrived on the scene of the fire, which was in their neighborhood, they helped an elderly couple out of the house, rescued two dogs, and performed a 360-degree inspection to make sure that the electricity and gas were shut off. When firefighters arrived several minutes later, they were impressed with the work that the CERT members had performed. Firefighters believe the fire was caused by a lightning strike.

Walton County CERT Coordinator Ofelia Murphy first heard about the fire and the role that her team members played in responding to it from the local fire officials. “They told me, ‘These three guys that you put through the training did exactly what they were supposed to do, and if they hadn’t been there, those people might have lost their house,’” Murphy said. “They were very, very proud of them.”

Murphy, who coordinates four CERT Programs in the area, is proud, too – and for good reason. “It’s very, very



Walton County Emergency Response Division Director Ed Baltzley, left, poses with CERT members Dale Campbell, Jerry Stinson, and Bob Wadlington, and Walton County CERT Coordinator Ofelia Murphy.

rewarding,” Murphy said. “That’s exactly why I pick the best instructors that I can.”

Under the guidance of Murphy, who became coordinator in the fall of 2007, the Walton County CERT Program has grown, including a graduation of 55 students in January. Before that class graduated, Murphy attended the first preparedness exercise in the state held specifically for CERT coordinators. Fifty CERT coordinators from across Florida attended the exercise, which was hosted by the State Emergency Response Team near Jacksonville. The three-day event offered training in several topics, including fire safety and map gridding, and culminated with a disaster-simulation exercise.

“Anything that I can learn and bring back to them is a plus,” said Murphy, who arranges for local fire departments to conduct the CERT units on fire safety and disaster medical operations. If the actions of graduates such as Campbell, Stinson, and Wadlington are any indication, the training is being put to good use.

“**They told me, ‘These three guys that you put through the training did exactly what they were supposed to do, and if they hadn’t been there, those people might have lost their house,’**”

– Ofelia Murphy

News from the CERT National Program Office

The CERT National Office is excited to announce its new e-mail subscription service – GovDelivery. The National Office will use this subscription service to send you an e-mail announcing CERT news and updates, including the quarterly CERT newsletter. We hope you enjoy this new online feature and find it beneficial for you and your CERT Program.

Signing up is easy. Simply click on this web address for the free subscription service: <http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/subscribe.shtm> to receive your e-mail alerts with the latest breaking CERT news. No personal information is required, just an e-mail address where the CERT news and updates will be sent and the user's ZIP code and state. Once on the site, you can select other topics you would like to receive updates on, including disaster and/or emergency declaration, and national and local press releases. You will receive an e-mail alert as soon as the CERT news is posted on the website, and for any of the other FEMA topics you selected.

As of today's date, GovDelivery has over 50,000 e-mail addresses registered from people who have signed up to receive CERT alerts. This subscription service is a great way to learn what CERT members and programs are doing across the country.

CERT Program Interviews

While CERT Programs throughout the country operate under the same guiding principle, no two programs are exactly alike. There are differences in size, sponsorship, and supplemental courses offered, as well as regional differences in how CERT Programs are used. The following interviews – one with the coordinator of a well-established program and the other with the coordinator of a relatively new program – illustrate the importance of understanding how other CERTs operate, no matter how different each program is from your own.



Kevin Hansen
Layton City, UT CERT Coordinator
khansen@laytoncity.org

Kevin Hansen, who has more than 17 years of experience with fire and emergency management services, has served as Layton City, UT CERT Coordinator for 5 years. During that time, he has watched the CERT Program grow

into one of the primary sources of volunteerism in the city.

Layton City CERT, which is sponsored by the fire department and was launched more than 10 years ago, has grown in part through an outreach program of instructors going into the community to deliver training. "We've seen a lot of groups with the outreach program," Hansen said. "It's convenient for them because it's in their specific location. A lot more interest is being generated."

One of Hansen's biggest concerns going forward is that Layton City CERT members will become lulled into thinking that, once they have been trained, they are set for life. Hansen encourages all members to attend training sessions free of charge to fine-tune their skills and ensure that they are prepared in the event of a disaster. While the team has helped sandbag during flash floods, it has most often been activated for non-emergencies.

"We've started to use them on the Fourth of July, doing a little bit of crowd control and a little bit of medical," Hansen said. "There were a lot of positive comments that came back after that."

Hansen said there are no plans to add any training courses in the near future, but he has met with a couple of local high schools about the possibility of implementing Teen CERT training. Mostly, he wants to focus on ways to better utilize the core group of CERT members who are already trained.

(Continued on page 8)

CERT Program Interviews *(Continued from page 7)*

“One of the biggest challenges is capturing and keeping the interest of these volunteers,” said Hansen, who has considered starting a monthly or quarterly CERT newsletter for Layton City. “It’s important to make sure that you have a well-defined program and you know where you’re headed.”

Hansen offered some advice for CERT Programs young and old:

“CERT Coordinators should show interest in their members, not just sit tight and call on them when needed. There should be regular meetings with district leaders to keep excitement high. Enthusiasm is powerful and invaluable.”



Don Smith
Butler County, KS CERT Coordinator
bucocert@yahoo.com

Don Smith takes a systematic approach to improving the Butler County CERT Program in Kansas. Every year, he gathers feedback from his CERT members and invites them to a roundtable discussion about the previous 12 months. He sets out to address the negatives and

build on the positives.

“Every year, we look at what happened the year before,” Smith said. “Then we do a series of classes to take care of what we see as weaknesses from the year before.”

Last year, Smith oversaw one of several CERTs from across Kansas who pitched in with the relief effort in Chapman, where a tornado damaged 75 percent of the town’s homes. Managing spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers on-site was a challenge for the Butler County team, so Smith arranged for classes related to that skill.

In addition to gearing supplemental training toward specific needs of the program, Butler County offers a host of other courses, including crime scene preservation and identifying and responding to drug and meth labs.

The Butler County CERT Program, which was formed about 5 years ago, has assisted in a variety of non-emergency events, including traffic control for college football games, crowd control for parades, and even providing security for the legendary Budweiser Clydesdales when they’re in town for a special event. “We take care of them from 7 at night until 7 in the morning,” Smith said.

There are CERT Programs in all seven towns of Butler County. Each town has a team leader, and each team leader carries a pager.

Smith is constantly looking for ways to attract new volunteers to his relatively new program. He took advantage of his close working relationship with a local junior college to produce a 10-minute

public service announcement. The video features local law enforcement and emergency services personnel talking about the CERT Program.

For new CERT Programs hoping to expand their reach, Smith’s advice is simple: Do what’s asked of you, and do it well.

“When we started out, we did anything that we were asked to do, and we just grew from there,” he said. “I tell my team, ‘Leave your egos at home. Whatever you’re asked to do, do it, and don’t complain.’ The sheriff says that’s the reason he likes us: We get it done, and we go home. That really helps with their loyalty to us.”

“**CERT Coordinators should show interest in their members, not just sit tight and call on them when needed. There should be regular meetings with district leaders to keep excitement high. Enthusiasm is powerful and invaluable.**”

– Kevin Hansen

“**Every year, we look at what happened the year before. Then we do a series of classes to take care of what we see as weaknesses from the year before.**”

– Don Smith

FAQ

Q: How do we get our local CERT Program registered in the National CERT registry?

A: One thing to keep in mind when you are ready to register your CERT Program in the registry is that the CERT on-line registration page is used only to register official CERT Programs. It is not intended to register individuals or individual teams that are sponsored by a local CERT Program. An official CERT Program must meet the following criteria:

- Be endorsed and/or operated by a local emergency response organization such as your local fire department or local emergency management or law enforcement agency.
- Conduct the CERT Basic Training Course and a CERT exercise at least once per year.
- Identify a point of contact to be posted with other program information on the national CERT website.

The official CERT Program point of contact (POC) will submit his or her information using the template provided online. When submitted, the information goes directly to the State CERT Coordinator (or the State Citizen Corps Coordinator if there isn't a State CERT Coordinator) for review. The State Coordinator will review and either approve or deny the registration. The local CERT POC will receive an email informing them of their approval or denial. If approved, the local POC will receive a password to log in to the registration page. This password will be used periodically by the POC to update the page as the program changes.

Contact your State CERT Coordinator with any questions regarding your local CERT. He or she should be able to assist you with updating your registration page and more. Your State CERT Coordinator can be located on the CERT homepage link at www.citizencorps.gov/cert. Click on State Directory to locate your state and program manager. You can also contact the National CERT Office with any questions at cert@dhs.gov.

Submitting Stories to the National CERT Newsletter

The National CERT Newsletter is published quarterly and welcomes stories from local, state, tribal, and territorial CERT Programs. For example:

- CERT in Action – Activations in actual emergencies
- CERT exercises you have conducted
- A CERT member who has gone above and beyond the call of duty
- Community awards/commendations your CERT Program/teams have received
- Innovative ways you have dealt with challenges in your CERT Program

When submitting a story, please include:

- City/state of event
- Names of people/organizations involved
- Date(s) of activity
- Author's contact information
- Other relevant information

Format: Articles should be between 50 and 150 words.
Submit text as a Microsoft Word file or paste article text

directly to e-mail. (PDF files cannot be used.)

Photos: Submit as an e-mail attachment in JPG or TIF file format. Include names of people in photo and a description of what they are doing and why. Please provide only photos approved for publication.

Deadline: Articles considered for the next publication must be received by April 30, 2009. Send your articles to cert@dhs.gov. Include in subject line: "Submission for CERT Newsletter."

Note: CERT retains the right to edit all stories for length, clarity, and accuracy.

Acceptance: Publication of submitted materials is based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to timeliness, space available, completeness of information, and relevance.