

RELATED TERMS

- Community Emergency Response Team
- Volunteers



**Lessons Learned
Information Sharing**
www.LLIS.gov

PRIMARY DISCIPLINES

- City and State Executive Offices
- Volunteers/Donations Management

GOOD STORY

Deerfield Beach's Neighborhood Outreach CERT Recruitment Program

SUMMARY

Deerfield Beach wanted to increase the size of its Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), so the Office of Hazard Mitigation organized Neighborhood Outreach block parties in each of the city's 17 neighborhoods to publicize CERT and recruit new members.

BACKGROUND

Deerfield Beach is a model of forward-thinking emergency preparedness. Hurricanes are a constant threat for this small, coastal community in southern Florida, so the city's Office of Hazard Mitigation (OHM) is constantly looking for new ways to increase preparedness. Schools sponsor hurricane preparedness poster contests. Business leaders meet monthly to share disaster response ideas. Residents can even apply for financial aid to retrofit their homes with hurricane shutters and other safety features.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training is one component of Deerfield Beach's emergency preparedness campaign. In a large-scale disaster such as a hurricane, professional responders such as firefighters and police are likely to be overwhelmed. Many citizens will want to help during such an event, but jumping into a crisis without training can be ineffective, or worse, dangerous. CERT training equips citizens with the basic knowledge they need to help their own neighborhoods during disasters. CERT members are qualified to perform many tasks that are critical during the first few minutes of a crisis, such as triaging victims, providing basic first aid, and extinguishing small fires.

GOALS

By the end of 1998, Deerfield Beach had 50 CERT members trained. The OHM, however, wanted CERT teams in each of Deerfield Beach's 17 neighborhoods. To meet that goal, Deerfield Beach needed to recruit and train several hundred CERT members. In 1999, the OHM launched the Neighborhood Outreach program, which helped Deerfield Beach CERT to reach its target size by 2003.

DESCRIPTION

Get People to the Party

The OHM begins advertising Neighborhood Outreach block parties months in advance. Fliers are hand delivered to a six- or seven-block neighborhood at least three times. On the day of the party, OHM blocks off the streets and stages a fair with as much food and fun as possible. Hamburgers (barbequed by the Deerfield Beach Fire Department), hot dogs, and face painting are free. Residents can listen to local bands play, meet other members of their community, or take a turn climbing the rock wall. These parties attract many more

people than informational meetings about CERT would. "If you only invite people to meetings," explains CERT leader Phillip Vias, "nobody would show up."

Inform and Recruit Partygoers

At each party OHM sets up several booths which offer important public safety information about everything from smoke detectors to hurricane insurance. One of the booths advertises CERT, and gives partygoers the opportunity to sign up for CERT training. The booth is manned by CERT members who can discuss CERT training and membership with those who are interested. At a typical block party, several hundred people attend, and 10 or 12 sign up for training.

Reinforce Ties within CERT

In addition to recruiting new CERT members, Deerfield Beach's block parties also serve to strengthen the sense of community among those who already belong to CERT. CERT members help with planning and setup before the parties, and act as CERT representatives during the party. "Deploying" CERT on a regular basis, even for an event as casual as a party, strengthens the Deerfield Beach CERT program.

Build on Success

Deerfield Beach's Neighborhood Outreach block parties have been so successful that the city discontinued the program in 2003 because their CERT teams were too full to accept new members. Deerfield Beach has not suffered a major disaster, natural or man-made, within the past few years, but OHM believes its investment in CERT has already yielded valuable returns. CERT members have participated in searches for missing children and helped elderly citizens equip their houses with hurricane shutters. The CERT teams also provide the OHM with manpower during Deerfield Beach's annual Beach Blowout party, which alerts citizens that hurricane season has begun.

REQUIREMENTS

Key to Success

Neighborhood Outreach block parties were successful recruiting tools because they were fun. Deerfield Beach's OHM included a variety of entertaining activities at every party, and that ensured a high turnout. Because so many people came to the parties, it was easy for the OHM to find the 10 or 12 people in each neighborhood who were a good fit for the CERT program.

Resources

Each party costs around \$1500. The parties are staffed by volunteers, with the exception of Hazard Mitigation Coordinator Ronald Ruback, who organizes the events.

Links

Deerfield Beach: <http://www.deerfield-beach.com/>

DISCLAIMER

This website and its contents are provided for informational purposes only and do not represent the official position of the US Department of Homeland Security or the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) and are provided without warranty or guarantee of any kind. The reader is directed to the following site for a full recitation of this Disclaimer: www.ilis.gov.