



# National NEWSLETTER

Vol. 1 – Issue 1

## A Letter from the Administrator

Dear CERT Members, Program Advocates, and State, Local, Tribal and Territorial CERT Program Coordinators,

I'm very proud to introduce the first issue of FEMA's quarterly National CERT Newsletter. The Community Emergency Response Team Program is FEMA's premier volunteer program for citizens involved in emergency management training. Because of your enthusiasm and commitment to emergency preparedness and training for basic disaster response, CERT has grown tremendously throughout the years—from 244 local programs in 27 states in 2002, to 3,011 programs in every state and territory today. We're pleased to publish a newsletter that will allow you and other CERT advocates across the country to share your stories and best practices.

CERT members lead the way in taking personal responsibility for preparedness and assistance to professional first responders during disasters. Since professional responders make up just 1% of the population, CERTs in our neighborhoods, schools and the workplace should help all of us sleep better at night. CERT members not only step up to provide support for emergency response in their communities, they also volunteer with other Citizen Corps Partner Programs and Affiliates when the call goes out. Recently the Meals On Wheels Association of America,

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## CERT Volunteers Join Forces with Meals On Wheels

The National CERT Office has joined forces with one of the Citizen Corps National Affiliates, Meals On Wheels Association of America (MOWAA), to assist with the daily delivery of meals to homebound seniors across the country. As gas prices soared in June 2008, many Meals On Wheels volunteers found that their ability to help with meal deliveries was seriously hindered, thus leaving many homebound seniors without their one daily hot meal. When the call went out for additional volunteers to prepare and deliver meals, Ms. Enid Borden, the President and CEO of MOWAA said, "We received hundreds of emails and calls from CERT members ready to start working that day. In times of crisis, we rely on our partners to help out." Ms. Borden is a big believer in looking outside of MOWAA for help with her program and believes that, "when we as Americans get together, we can do anything. It is evident that CERT members understand the message of helping one another out. If we nourish bellies, in return we have a healthy community," Ms. Borden said, reflecting on the importance of volunteer programs working together to take care of our neighbors and communities.

Brock Bierman, Director of FEMA's Community Preparedness Division, promotes the collaboration between Meals On Wheels and CERT, along with all of the other

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



NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS DIRECTORATE





## CERT IN ACTION – Short Takes

### Keizer CERT Assists Oregon Communities

The Keizer CERT was activated on February 6, 2008, traveled to Detroit and Idanha, Oregon, where they helped residents dig out from under the largest snowfall in decades. Fifteen members of the CERT Program, sponsored by the Keizer Fire District, spent 2 days clearing the roofs of homes and other structures in danger of collapse due to heavy snow accumulation. The team also focused on assisting elderly and ill residents. Keizer CERT Executive Director Greg Biben said that his CERT members are highly motivated people who seek ways to use their training to help others. They help out in their own communities and are also willing to travel to other places to lend a hand. For example, Keizer CERT members went to Florida after three damaging hurricanes in 2004 and to Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

### Tulsa, Oklahoma Teams Activated for Shelter Operations

CERT and Crisis Response Teams (CRT) volunteers were activated during a December 2007 storm to assist in shelter operations, communications, and traffic control (barricading roads and working with the Public Works division). Many team members are also members of the Medical Reserve Corps and were activated for shelter operations as well as to provide supplemental personnel to assist at impacted hospitals. CERTs/CRTs were dispatched to check on the welfare of special needs citizens and those who live in remote areas impacted by the storm.

### CERT Volunteers Join Forces with Meals On Wheels *(Continued from page 1)*

Citizen Corps Partner Programs and Affiliates. “As we continue to bring together more partners, our success in preparing our nation for a well-coordinated and quick response is inevitable.” He also noted that CERT continues to lead the way in preparing citizens and educating community leaders about the value of a trained and educated citizenry.

Ms. Dawn Revelle, a CERT volunteer with the Fullerton, CA fire department, recognized the importance of helping out in her community. When she heard about the need for volunteers to deliver meals, Ms. Revelle contacted her local Meals On Wheels Program and offered her help. “We need to assist our seniors to ensure that they are taken care of. They need our help and I am in a position to volunteer my time and use my resources to make sure that the senior population is recognized and well-taken care of.”

Once again, CERT members step up to be part of a team when help is needed. Please contact your local Meals On Wheels program to help provide assistance to people in need. You can visit [www.mowaa.org](http://www.mowaa.org) to locate a Meals On Wheels Program in your area and get registered today.

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### A Letter from the Administrator *(Continued from page 1)*

a Citizen Corps Affiliate, urgently called on local CERT volunteers across the country to help deliver meals to homebound seniors as many Meals On Wheels volunteers were no longer able to assist due to high gas prices. According to Meals On Wheels, CERT members turned out in great numbers to help with yet another kind of community emergency.

We hope that you’ll find every issue of the CERT National Newsletter informative and encouraging, and that you’ll have stories from your local, tribal, state or territorial CERT Program to share. In addition to news and information from the National CERT Program Office, regular features will include articles and “short takes” on CERT activations for emergency response, features on CERT exercises and special events from around the country, and best practices to address challenges shared by local CERT Programs.

I want to congratulate and thank each of you for the success of the program to date, and to thank you for your ongoing enthusiasm for CERT. We look forward to hearing from you and seeing your stories in the newsletter!

Sincerely,

**R. David Paulison**  
Administrator  
Federal Emergency Management Agency

## News from the National Office

### Updated and New CERT Training Materials

It's clear that great volunteers, great training, and great trainers are foundations of the CERT Program. With that in mind, the National CERT Program Office has undertaken a number of projects to update current training materials and to develop new materials and tools. As we go to press, three major efforts are underway:

- Updating the CERT Basic Training Course
- Developing a new standard national CERT Train-the-Trainer Course
- Finalizing six new videos

To initiate the update of the CERT Basic Training Course, CERT subject matter experts from across the country convened for 3 days at the Emergency Management Institute in Emmitsburg, Maryland to review, discuss, and suggest changes to the curriculum. The discussion was highly energized during the 3-day review process. Edits and additions to the existing material—last updated in 2003—were then incorporated. While the modules and the skills sets in the basic training didn't change, all of the protocols were brought up-to-date. To ensure that the update would be comprehensive, a review draft was then sent to all of the State or Territorial CERT points-of-contact with a request for comments from up to three individuals in the State or Territory. Those comments have helped to further refine the updated material. Thanks to all of you who provided input!

The new videos will complement classroom delivery of the training and can also be used as a refresher for CERT participants and teams who have already completed the Basic Training. The updated CERT Basic Training Instructor Guide, the Participant Manual, and the videos will be online by the end of October 2008.

The new CERT Train-the-Trainer (T-T-T) Course will reflect the updated CERT Basic Training Course. Like the process to update the basic training, development of the new T-T-T started with a team of subject matter experts from across the country, many of them from the instructional teams that conducted the first T-T-T sessions at the Emergency Management Institute in the 1990s. The experts

focused on developing content and materials that will help in training great CERT trainers all over the country. The new course will be 2 ½ days long and will be piloted in October. It will be online by the end of November.

In the near future, look for three new supplemental training modules, 3-4 hour units for CERT members who have already completed the Basic Training Course. We will keep you informed with updates in the CERT National Newsletter and via direct e-mails to State and Territorial points-of-contact and to local CERT Program contacts. If you are a local CERT Program contact and want to be sure to receive the e-mail updates, please check that your program information is current in the CERT National Registry.

### Camera! Action! Emergency Response Training Video Shoot for National CERT Program



*Steve Agnew films CERT rescue team for training video.*

*From the Bowie, MD Star Gazette, Andrea Noble, Staff Writer; Christopher Anderson, Photographer*

While the majority of the Marketplace Mall in Bowie, MD remains vacant and awaiting redevelopment, at least one national organization – the National Community Emergency Response Team Program – has found a use for it. They shot scenes for the new CERT training video inside the mall on June 4, 2008. “When we were scouting locations for the

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## Presidential Volunteer Service Award



Citizen Corps has partnered with the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation to provide 10,000 Presidential Volunteer Service Awards free of charge to Councils and Citizen Corps Partner Programs: Community Emergency Response Team

(CERT) Program, Fire Corps, Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), Neighborhood Watch, and Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS). It is with sincere appreciation that we are able to pay tribute to volunteers who support Citizen Corps programs and initiatives. The President's Volunteer Service Award is issued by the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation on behalf of the President of the United States to recognize the best in American spirit, and to encourage all Americans to improve their communities through volunteer service and civic participation. The Award is given to individuals, families, and groups that have achieved a certain standard – measured by the number of hours served over a 12-month period or cumulative hours earned over the course of a lifetime.

Citizen Corps has been registered on the Presidential Volunteer Service Award website as a national Leadership Organization and has pre-registered state, local, and tribal Citizen Corps Councils and all local Program Partners including all registered local CERT Programs to be official Certifying Organizations. As a Certifying Organization, your CERT Program is approved to review and verify a volunteer's hours, and to nominate and distribute the President's Volunteer Service Award. Award packages include a letter from the President, a certificate of achievement (with customized logo depending on affiliation), and a pin. Please note that, although the 10,000 awards are free of charge, Councils and Programs will be responsible for shipping and handling costs. To learn more about being a Certifying Organization, please visit:

<http://www.presidentialserviceawards.gov/s/citizencorps>.

## News from the National Office

*(Continued from page 3)*

video shoot I thought, 'This place is really great and really creepy and could be a good location,'" said Rachel Jacky, FEMA's National CERT Director.

"County CERT Programs and fire departments have used the mall for training exercises in the past, but this is the first film to be produced there," said Calvin Hawkins Jr., a Prince George's County Office of Emergency Management spokesman. "[This building] is already set up in a disaster situation," Hawkins said of the reason that agencies favor the site for training exercises. "It can be overwhelming and frightening. This is an opportunity to build up [trainees'] confidence."

Alan Creveling, Bowie's Emergency Management Resource Coordinator, said the city has made an effort to support and supplement the County's emergency management programs. "The mere fact they came out here to do their photo shoot shows that," he said.

Additional scenes were shot June 5th and 6th at the Summerfield Housing complex in Landover, MD.

The new CERT video will refine and update emergency response and life saving skills depicted in the training video currently in use. The current video was produced over 10 years ago. "The purpose of the training video is for individuals taking CERT basic training to see a good example of team operations in a basic emergency," Jacky said.

This video will feature techniques such as carrying injured victims from a site, properly searching a building for victims, and assessing injuries, as well as team organization. In addition to CERT training, it will also be used in community forums to promote the program.

In a small former office space in the rear of the Marketplace Mall, CERT volunteers donning official green vests repeated rolling and lifting victims doused in fake blood for the camera. The storyline of the film revolves around CERT members responding to a community center that has been damaged by high winds. Between takes, makeup artist Crystal Soveroski from Berwyn Heights dabbed more fake blood on victims who lay scattered on the floor. Ervin Reid, a CERT volunteer from Washington, D.C. said, "I've played the victim several times and I always come back to help."

The new CERT training video will be released in fall 2008.

## Local CERT Exercises

### Mississippi Citizen Corps Hosts Their First CERT Olympics

The Mississippi Citizen Corps Program, the volunteer arm of Mississippi's Homeland Security Department, hosted their state's first Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Winter Olympics on Saturday and Sunday, March 8 and 9, 2008, in Raymond. The CERT Winter Olympics brought together CERTs from across the state to compete against each other in hands-on response activities and to network with other volunteers. On the first day, all participants had the opportunity to attend supplemental training on topics including Mississippi Animal Response Teams, Special Needs Populations, Incident Command System (ICS), and additional training opportunities. On the second day, participants broke into 8 teams comprised of 10 members each for the Olympics. Each team represented a different CERT Program. Along with standard community CERT, both Teen CERT and Campus CERT were represented among the competing teams. The CERT Olympics included Communication Team Building, "ICS Jeopardy," Building Search/Clearing, Medical Triage Setup, and Patient Treatment and Carry. Two judges at each of the event sites shared the tough job of evaluating each team's performance. The judges gave awards for the best CERT in each event, and also to the top three CERTs overall.

Todd Frier, the State Citizen Corps Program Director from the Mississippi Office of Homeland Security, noted that the CERT volunteers performed their skills as if they were responding

to a real disaster. During the awards ceremony, Mr. Frier said, "The spirit of volunteerism is a strong sentiment throughout Mississippi. Through events like the CERT Olympics and with the Citizen Corps Program, we are able to keep volunteers excited and trained to take care of themselves and their communities. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina it was very evident that even with the large number of well-trained professional responders in the state, having a plan and being CERT-trained put volunteers way ahead of the curve." The nearly 100 CERT members from across the state who participated in this inaugural event gave real meaning to the important message of using community volunteers in Mississippi's disaster preparedness efforts. Mr. Frier noted that the state hopes to conduct CERT Olympics twice each year, including a slate of different events in each competition.

### Pinellas County, FL CERT Holds "Lost Child" Exercise



The Pinellas County, Florida, CERT Program hosted a full day of training revolving around a 'lost child' scenario in January 2008. The drill, which was covered by the Tampa Bay area press, began with the "Live Safe" program, designed to raise awareness about pro-

tecting children from abduction. Following the presentation, 75 CERT members received training and then carried out a search for a 'lost child' in a large park, canvassing a neighborhood with flyers and looking for clues.

Seventy-six percent of missing children who are abducted and murdered by a non-family member are killed within the first 3 hours of being taken. The drill showed how a well-trained CERT using the National Incident Management System (NIMS) may save a child's life.

### Arlington, VA CERT Participates in Active Shooter Exercise

In August 2007, Arlington CERT members assisted county public safety agencies in testing their readiness in the event of a large scale emergency. The exercise was called "Northern Shield" and simulated a campus shooting and hostage situation at Marymount University. It was the first joint exercise of Arlington County's fire, police, and sheriff departments. NIMS-trained CERT members were invited to participate, although volunteers were only told the specifics of the scenario on the day of the exercise to make the exercise more realistic.

The drill included securing the scene and the triage and treatment of the wounded. CERT members also played the parts of five hostages for whom the police negotiated. Another CERT member provided the expertise in stage makeup to simulate injuries, achieving some dramatically realistic effects.

## Local CERT Training

### Emergency Management Institute (EMI), Independent Study

In February 2008, the Independent Study Program at the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) implemented the EMI course IS-800.B - National Response Framework, an Introduction. The Independent Study (IS) course is now available for students who have completed 800.A, National Response Plan, an Introduction.

The course covers the purpose of the National Response Framework (NRF), its response doctrine, roles and responsibilities, actions that support national response, the organizations used for multi-agency coordination, and the relationship between planning and national preparedness. Access the site for IS-800.B at <http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/is800b.asp>.

### Missouri Conducts CERT Training for Deaf and Hard of Hearing



*CERT Instructors Ron Megert and Tim Bonno with interpreters helping sign*

Like other states across the country, the State of Missouri has a very robust and active Community Emergency

Response Team (CERT) Program. Late last year, the Missouri State Emergency Management Agency (MO-SEMA) partnered with the Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the Gateway Citizen Corps Coalition to make CERT available to deaf and hard of hearing community members.

According to statistics provided by the Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH), there are approximately 10,071 deaf citizens and 497,974 hard of hearing citizens living in the state. This diverse group will be equally affected by disasters and should be as prepared as their hearing neighbors. Kim Davis, Workshop/Training Specialist at the MCDHH said, "Having completed the CERT training myself, I feel more prepared for emergencies or disasters that might happen. I can now be part of the solution in my community instead of part of the problem. Others who are deaf or hard of hearing must take responsibility to prepare them-

selves and their families too, and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing CERT training is a great way to do that."

In late 2007, the MO-SEMA was contacted by the MCDHH with a request that MO-SEMA sponsor a CERT course for the deaf and hard of hearing. MO-SEMA contacted the

Gateway Citizen Corps Coalition (GCCC) which facilitates community preparedness within the St. Louis region.

The leadership of the GCCC met with

MO-SEMA and MCDHH and facilitated the development of a draft appendix to the CERT Instructor Guide, and the first Missouri Deaf and Hard of Hearing CERT training was conducted in late December 2007 in Columbia, MO. A total of 14 committed citizens showed up, ready, willing, and able. During delivery of the full 20-hour CERT basic curriculum, a number of minor "communications issues" were addressed. When it was all over, another group of citizens graduated from CERT, better prepared to help themselves and their community.

A second round of CERT basic training for deaf and hard of hearing participants was conducted in May 2008. The training included some instructional improvements that resulted from feedback from the first class. Similar to the first class, course evaluations showed that the course material and the instructional team were greatly appreciated by the students. At this time, another round of CERT training for deaf and hard of hearing volunteers is being considered for later this year. According to Matt Nutt, Citizen Corps Coordinator, MO-SEMA, "From the disasters we've experienced in the past, we know that our citizens, when properly trained, can have a very powerful and positive impact in all phases of emergency management. We must continue to find ways to reach out and help those citizens with special needs and encourage them to become prepared and get involved."

For more information about the Gateway Citizen Corps Coalition and the CERT training they facilitate, please contact Tim Bonno at [tjb0000@swbell.net](mailto:tjb0000@swbell.net).

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## Local CERT Training *(Continued from page 6)*



### **Minot, North Dakota Trains Neighborhood, Workplace and Campus CERT**

With a population of approximately 37,000, Capt. Dean Lenertz makes sure the citizens of Minot, North Dakota, are well-prepared and trained for an emergency in their community. "CERT members are trained to deal with minor injuries to major disasters such as tornadoes, train derailments, terrorist attacks, flooding and major fires or explosions," Lenertz said. "They learn to put out small fires, treat minor injuries, do search and rescue in damaged structures and also deal with disaster psychology." This training, according to Lenertz, is important because, even with the best of intentions, people can end up falling all over themselves in a stressful situation.

"We have trained about 150 citizens so far, from the general public to area businesses such as ING, Minot Vocational Workshop, North Central Human Services, RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program), North Dakota Department of Transportation and Choice Hotels International," said Capt. Lenertz, the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Coordinator and Trainer at the Minot Fire Department.

Most recently, 18 employees of Choice Hotels completed their CERT training in March 2008. In June and October 2007, Capt. Lenertz conducted CERT training for 37 employees of the Department of Transportation (DOT) and also trained 14 employees at the North Central Human Services in April 2007.

"These businesses will have trained people to handle emergencies at their businesses and job site until professionals, such as fire and ambulance crews, can arrive," Capt. Lenertz said. "These citizens can also use their training in their own neighborhoods when they are at home at night and weekends."

Capt. Lenertz is presently working with Minot State University on setting up a Campus CERT class later this year, as well as classes for other businesses and citizens of the Minot area. He is also working with ambulance services from smaller towns to provide CERT training to their citizens.

### **Johnson & Johnson CERT Graduates Join Ranks of Corporate Emergency Response Teams**

New Jersey continues to partner with their corporate community who are interested in providing their employees with disaster training. Johnson & Johnson join a growing number of New Jersey businesses that have embraced the CERT Program. In April 2008, the Johnson & Johnson Consumer Companies, Inc. facility in the Skillman section of Montgomery Township recognized nine of their employees who completed the CERT Basic Training. They re-

ceived their training from Montgomery Township Police in partnership with the Somerset County and State Office of Emergency Management.

Other corporate organizations in New Jersey who have CERT trained staff include UBS, United Water, NJ Natural Resources, American Reinsurance Company, AIG, and a number of the Atlantic City Casinos. All businesses that get involved with CERT partner with their local Office of Emergency Management so their members can be utilized in the community in the event of a disaster.

Peter Luther, President, Beauty Care North America and the site leader for Johnson & Johnson Consumer Companies, Inc. in Skillman said of his new CERT volunteers, "This dedicated group of employees took time out of their busy schedules for the CERT training and can now be called upon by the community in times of need. While we obviously hope there is not a need for their services, it is nice to know that they are prepared to help. We are extremely proud of them."

Added Montgomery Mayor Cecilia Birge: "On behalf of our Township Committee, I would like to congratulate the nine volunteers who have successfully completed their Community Emergency Response Team training. We greatly appreciate their willingness to contribute to the safety and security of the Township. We would also like to commend our Office of Emergency Management staff for their excellent work training these first CERT members in Montgomery. With CERT's help, our community is ready to tackle the most demanding emergency situations."

## FAQs

**Q:** Is CERT Basic Training offered online?

**A:** The CERT Basic Training Course is not offered online. To maintain the quality of basic training for program participants, the course is classroom-based and instructor-led, and uses lecture, demonstration, and hands-on practice throughout. It is not intended to be delivered online or via other “distance delivery” formats. Live instructors demonstrate CERT skills, coach participants as they practice each skill when it comes up in the training course, and help assure the following:

- Participants get timely answers to their questions. Since each of the nine modules of the course builds on concepts and knowledge acquired in previous modules, it is critical that participants have an opportunity to discuss, question, and have clarified the material from each unit as it is presented.
- Participants begin to establish basic competency with coached hands-on practice before they build on additional skills in following sessions, e.g., a chance to learn about and practice medical triage in Unit 3 before learning about and practicing head-to-toe secondary assessment in Unit 4. This gradual acquisition of the skills is not possible if live demonstration and hands-on practice are not conducted or if they are only conducted at the conclusion of online instruction (or via other distance delivery methods, such as DVDs).
- As the course progresses, participants learn and then practice successively more complex teamwork and application of ICS. Rescuer safety and the importance of teamwork are basic themes throughout the training. Participants’ ability to practice both throughout the course is one of the strengths of instructor-led, classroom-based training.

While the CERT Basic Training Course is not offered online, a CERT independent study course and a CERT Search & Rescue Tutorial are currently offered online at the CERT national website.

The online independent study course, “Introduction to Community Emergency Response Teams” (IS-317), provides an overview of CERT for those who are interested in the concept and may be interested in taking the classroom-based basic training. IS-317 can also be used as a refresher for current team members who have already completed the classroom-based basic training. The online course has six modules and takes 6 to 8 hours to complete. When you successfully finish the online course, you receive a certificate of completion that can be printed from a computer.

Note that the online independent study course does not replace the CERT Basic Training Course.

The online CERT Search & Rescue Tutorial provides CERT-trained individuals with a 30-minute interactive review and an opportunity to refresh their skills in search and rescue techniques. Teams can also use the tutorial as a group refresher activity. When you successfully complete the tutorial, you will receive a certificate of completion that can be printed from a computer.

Access “Introduction to Community Emergency Response Teams” (IS-317) at <http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/IS317/>.

Access the online CERT Search & Rescue Tutorial at <http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/SandR/introduction.htm>.





## Submitting Stories to the National CERT Newsletter

The National CERT Newsletter welcomes stories from all local, state, tribal, and territorial CERT Programs. Please tell us what is happening in your area. What would you like to share with other CERT Programs around the country? All program news is welcome. Here are some story ideas to consider:

- Your CERT in Action – CERT activations in emergency or non-emergency community service projects
- CERT exercises you have conducted
- A CERT member who has acted above and beyond the call of duty
- Community awards or commendations your CERT Program or teams have received
- Innovative ways you have dealt with challenges in your CERT Program

The National CERT Newsletter will be published quarterly. If you would like to submit a story for consideration, please review and follow our editorial policy. Be sure your submission contains complete and accurate information, including:

- City and state where the event happened
- Names of people or organizations involved
- Date(s) of activity
- Contact information for the author
- Any other relevant information

**Length:** Articles should be between 50 and 150 words or 1-3 paragraphs long.

**Format:** Submit text as a Microsoft Word file using 12pt Times New Roman font or paste the text of the article directly into your email. (Articles submitted as PDF files cannot be used.)

**Photos:** Submit a photo as an attachment to your email in JPG or TIF file format. Include the names of people in the photo and a description of what they are doing and why. **NOTE:** Please only provide photos approved for publication.

**Submission Deadline:** Articles considered for the next publication must be received by November 2008. Send your articles to [CERT@dhs.gov](mailto:CERT@dhs.gov). Type in the subject line “Submission for CERT Newsletter.”

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

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