



National NEWSLETTER

Vol. 4 – Issue 2

National CERT Newsletter: Stories from the Eastern U.S.

This issue of the National CERT Newsletter includes stories from CERT programs in the eastern states. The eastern states, in FEMA Regions I – IV, experience a wide range of disasters—floods, winter storms, tornadoes, hurricanes and more. CERT successes here reflect the efforts of the 636 registered CERT programs in the eastern U.S. We hope you'll enjoy the following stories of how CERT programs are supporting disaster response and hometown resiliency in their communities.

The next issue of the Newsletter will feature CERT stories from the central states. We want to thank everyone who contributed stories to these issues. We hope a third issue will feature the CERTs in the western states. If your CERT program is in FEMA Regions VIII, IX, or X, and you have a newsletter story, please send it now to cert@dhs.gov.

Thank you and please keep those stories coming wherever you live!

White House and FEMA Recognize Individual & Community Preparedness Champion



The White House Seal

In this newsletter issue devoted to CERT people and programs in the eastern states, we feature an Individual and Community Preparedness Award winner from New York City, John Solomon.

The White House's Champions of Change series and the Federal Emergency Management Agency's 2011 Individual and Community Preparedness Awards recognized the achievements of individuals and organizations that help make our communities safer, stronger and better prepared to manage any emergency situation. Among the honorees, ceremonies at the White House and FEMA headquarters paid tribute to CERT member, the late John D. Solomon of New York.

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



NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS DIRECTORATE



Autauga County/Prattsville, Ala. CERT Activated for Tornado Damage Assessment

When two tornados ripped through central Alabama in January and March 2012, the Autauga/Prattsville CERT was on hand to assist the stricken communities. CERT volunteers have become well known in the region as experienced and capable in providing damage assessment.

“It was after this activation that we recognized we needed even more people trained in damage assessment.”

– Roy LaPorte, Council Secretary

It all began with a tornado that hit the area in 2008. “We didn’t have anybody trained in damage assessment,” said Roy LaPorte, Council Secretary of the Autauga County/Prattsville CERT. “This was the impetus to begin training for our members.”

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Alpharetta, Ga. CERT Hosts State’s Largest Mock Disaster Drill

The scene: A Community Fun Day sponsored by a local company for its employees and their families.

The emergency: A rapidly moving storm spawns a tornado, destroying the community center and many large trees. Approximately 100 persons at the Community Fun Day are injured.

The response: CERT is deployed to the area because emergency responders are overwhelmed with 9-1-1 calls elsewhere in the city.

Alpharetta, Ga. CERT recently hosted this disaster drill, the largest mock disaster drill held to date in the state. The Alpharetta CERT program, along with four neighboring CERT programs in Atlanta, College Park, Fulton County and Sandy Springs worked together to plan the event that included over 100 “victims” in full moulage.

Seventy CERT members assisted in search and rescue and tended to injuries before emergency responders arrived 2 hours later. “We don’t do drills for our benefit. We do it for the benefit of the folks who have completed CERT training in order to keep their skills sharp,” said CERT coordinator Lt. Gary Robinson, who is also a member of the Alpharetta Fire Department. He added, “Our feeling is if you go to a

CERT class and don’t attend the drills, you will be more of a hindrance rather than a help during a real emergency.”

The victims were recruited from local Boy Scout and Girl Scout organizations and some were students in area drama classes. “We had more victims than CERT members because when you have a disaster, you normally have a lot more victims than responders,” said Lt. Robinson.



A CERT member talks to a victim to determine his injuries.

This was the eighth drill the neighboring CERT programs have planned and executed as a regional team. “We don’t train on earthquakes, we train on fires and felled trees,” said Lt. Robinson. “We have severe thunderstorms in this area and some of them spawn tornados. We try to do one in the winter and one in the

summer so that our members are prepared in the hot and the cold weather.”

Lt. Robinson admitted that it takes a lot of planning and constant emailing to coordinate the drill. “Once we pick a date, we will typically meet twice a month. Sometimes it might be a conference call but we try to meet face-to-face at a central area convenient for everyone. Then a month before the drill, we meet at the location where we are having the drill and do a walk-through of the site so that everyone can see the grounds.”

Another important planning aspect is safety. “A lot of safety planning goes into the drills. We watch out for the kids playing victims. A lot of our planning is to make sure that there is a perimeter of safety officers watching the kids and CERT members. For example, they watch to make sure that when team members lift a victim, they are lifting the proper way.”

The next drill is scheduled for April 2012, and this time the Sandy Springs CERT program will be hosting. “It’s all about teamwork,” said Lt. Robinson. “Without teamwork, you can’t pull off a successful drill.”

White House and FEMA Recognize Individual & Community Preparedness Champion

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Mr. Solomon received, posthumously, the John D. Solomon Preparedness Award. He was the first recipient of this prestigious award created by FEMA in his honor. The award will be presented each year as part of the Individual and Community Preparedness Awards to a distinguished organization, program, or individual who has made a profound impact on ensuring our nation is more resilient.

Mr. Solomon was an active CERT member, author and relentless advocate for citizen preparedness. “John was a beloved, dedicated and passionate CERT member who worked hard to ensure that everyone is prepared for emergencies,” said Herman Shafer, Director of Community Outreach in the New York City Office of Emergency Management. “John was an excellent journalist and a great New Yorker. He devoted his life to serving others and challenged us all to do better and to give more. We are proud to have his legacy live on.”

In New York City, the John D. Solomon NYC CERT Award for Exemplary Service in Emergency Preparedness Education is now presented annually to a NYC CERT



Emergency preparedness blogger John D. Solomon was honored with an award in his name.

“At his passing, Administrator Fugate stated that John ‘set the standard for what it means to be part of our nation’s emergency management team.’”

member who best embodies John’s enthusiasm for volunteerism and purposeful engagement to make their communities better prepared for emergencies.

As a writer, John’s blog, *In Case of Emergency, Read Blog: A Citizen’s Eye View Of Public Preparedness* was launched in March 2008 as research for a book he was writing on emergency preparedness from the vantage point of a father, husband and son interested in helping safeguard his family and community. His body of work, until his untimely death in November 2010, was striking in its reporting, analysis and engagement in preparing the public and informing professionals in the public and private sectors.

John reported from conferences he’d helped to organize as well as those he had not. He devised legislation to incentivize the sale of emergency supplies via “tax holidays,” evaluated how government and non-profit disaster relief organizations were using social media tools, celebrated others’ initiatives by calling them to the attention of policy makers and conducted contests to foster citizen preparedness. He videotaped leaders in the preparedness community for their tips on readiness including an interview with FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate which they taped just two months before John’s death.

At his passing, Administrator Fugate stated that John “set the standard for what it means to be part of our nation’s emergency management team.”

Others recognized in various areas of achievement include:

- American Red Cross of Greater Chicago - Outstanding Achievement in Youth Preparedness
- Arkansas State Citizen Corps - Outstanding State Citizen Corps Council Initiatives
- Be Ready Alliance Coordinating for Emergencies - Promising Partnerships
- Brenda Gormley, Tod Pritchard, and Carolyn Bluhm - Community Preparedness Heroes
- Citizen Corps of St. Claire County - Innovative Use of Technology
- Cobb County Health Preparedness and Response - Outstanding Achievement in Public Health
- David L. Maack - Engagement with Faith-Based Communities
- Earthquake Country Alliance - Awareness to Action
- The Great Central U.S. ShakeOut - Outstanding Drill, Exercise or Event
- NBC Universal CERT - Outstanding Community Emergency Response Team Initiative
- New York City - Outstanding Local Citizen Corps Council Initiatives
- San Manuel Band of Serrano Mission Indians - Preparing the Whole Community
- Washington State Emergency Management - Innovative Training and Education Programs

The 2012 Individual and Community Preparedness Awards nomination process opened April 10 and closes July 31, 2012. Individuals, programs, and organizations may be nominated in 11 categories. For more information, please visit the Awards page on <http://citizencorps.gov>.

Autauga County/ Prattsville, Ala. CERT Activated for Tornado Damage Assessment

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The CERT's damage assessment skills were first put to the test in April 2011 after a deadly tornado struck as residents slept. "A mobile home park was the main area affected," said Mr. LaPorte. "About 15 homes were destroyed and three people were killed. We had six CERT members do damage assessment and assist EMA the day after the tornado."



Autauga County/Prattsville CERT member Ben Reddoch assesses damage in 2011.

Just days later, a second tornado hit neighboring Elmore County killing seven residents and injuring 20. Approximately 20 CERT members assisted the local EMA team. "It was after this activation that we recognized we needed even more people trained in damage assessment. Since then we have had four more classes with the Red Cross and now have 30 members currently trained in large area damage assessment."

During the 2012 tornado activations, CERT members drove around the affected areas looking for damage. They talked to residents and defined the path of the tornado. "We were

recommended by the Red Cross because we've done damage assessment before and have developed strong relationships with them and the local police. We have demonstrated that we are skilled and organized," said Mr. LaPorte.

"Everyone loves to volunteer down here and help people in need," he said.

However, the Autauga County/Prattsville CERT has learned that volunteers must be mindful of the affected community during an emergency. "We provide our own food and water. If you're going outside your normal zone, you should set up your own logistical support so that you do not become a burden to the community you're trying to help."

Looking Back at Lessons Learned: Goffstown, N.H. CERT Activations



Overtuned propane truck in Goffstown, N.H.

The Goffstown, N.H. CERT was activated twice in the fall/winter 2011 to assist with community emergencies. The first activation occurred as Hurricane Irene made its way up the East Coast last August and threatened to flood a low-lying area of the town. Thirty CERT members went door-to-door to make sure residents were aware of the situation. "Goffstown has more than 100 homes by the Piscataquog River and we wanted to make sure people knew the water was coming and that they might have to evacuate," said Goffstown CERT Director Susan Jutras.

"We have had major floods in this area before, so we've done this on several occasions. We've got our process down pat," she said. "First Emergency Management activates us and we meet at the Police Department where they give us handouts to provide to residents on evacuation procedures and where to go. Then we split into six groups of five volunteers. Each group goes in one car with a driver and four persons who go door-to-door."

Each vehicle is assigned a certain section of the neighborhood and everyone works in tandem. "Two people take the right side of the road and two take the left side of the road," said Ms. Jutras. "Each car has a yellow strobe light and the driver makes sure

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Goffstown, N.H. CERT Activated During Hurricane Irene and After Truck Rollover

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Goffstown CERT member Deb Veary answers detour questions from a truck driver.

to follow the two groups down the road. Usually the team leader driving the car is a ham radio operator so that if there is an emergency of any kind, we can report it right away.”

Ms. Jutras stressed that volunteers should always be able to see the other members of their group. “They should never lose track of each other. I don’t care how far the car has to go or how long the wait; never lose eye contact with your group.” She also tells her volunteers to come prepared, “because it can get nasty if the winds pick up.” She recommends rain gear and a knapsack with water and granola bars. “New members may not realize what could happen while they’re out there. I always make sure that in the group of five, there are some seasoned group members, not a brand new group of five.”

Goffstown was lucky this time around. Hurricane Irene spared the town any

major damage. “With Hurricane Irene, we were lucky and nothing major happened,” said Ms. Jutras. She added that some residents who decided to stay in their homes invited them to storm parties and to join them for coffee. “We are known in the neighborhood.”

The morning of the second activation started out like any typical weekday morning in Goffstown. Many residents were going about their normal routine to get ready for school or work. However, this particular morning would be anything but routine for those who commute on Goffstown’s main road. In the early morning hours of December 22, 2011, the driver of a propane truck lost control on an icy patch of road, crashed into a telephone pole and overturned, leaking propane fuel onto the main thoroughfare through Goffstown.

“This accident occurred on the main corridor through town that everyone

uses to go to work,” said Ms. Jutras. “We got the call from Emergency Management at 6:45 a.m. that they needed our help.” Twelve CERT members were on the scene by 7 a.m.

“Our numbers were kind of low since it was a work day,” explained Ms. Jutras. Those CERT members spent the next 7.5 hours helping to reroute traffic while propane fuel was cleared from the road, the leak was plugged, the remaining propane was off-loaded and the truck was righted.

“There are a lot of businesses on this road. School buses use this road to take children to school. Parents take children to daycare. People commute to work,” said Ms. Jutras. “We had a lot of interaction with drivers as we explained how to get around since the road was closed.”

Over the course of the day, many CERT members had to deal with angry drivers who were upset with the road closure and took out their frustration on the volunteers. “One driver ignored a CERT member and went right through the road closure. We had a lot of members who didn’t know how to deal with angry people. What do you do in a situation like that? How do you diffuse the situation?”

By mid-afternoon, the accident scene was cleared and the road was open to traffic. The day’s experience prompted the Goffstown CERT volunteers to request a new item on the agenda. “We decided that we are going to have training on how to better deal with angry people,” said Ms. Jutras. “It takes talent and practice and the benefit is that our team will be able to better conduct themselves and take control of the situation in the next emergency.”

CERT Training Offered as Elective at NCCU



NCCU students receive their CERT kits.

Fifteen students at North Carolina Central University (NCCU), a public university located in Durham, NC, recently earned academic credit for completing a CERT course which was offered as part of the Criminal Justice curriculum. The university partnered with the North Carolina Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service during the spring 2011 semester to offer this elective that focused on basic CERT training and Train-the-Trainer course.

Dr. Harvey McMurray, chair of the Criminal Justice Department, explained that one of the concentrations under the Criminal Justice major is Homeland Security. "It was out of our interest in Homeland Security and public

safety that we saw CERT as a natural way to help develop capacity among students in the area of Emergency Management. Our thinking was that having CERT experience would help make our students more competitive in Homeland Security," he said.

"Also, the plan was to have students go through the CERT training and then they would identify underserved areas and reach out to develop the CERT program in these underserved areas. In the spirit of social responsibility, we wanted our students to give back," said Dr. McMurray.

He added, "Students were excited and it broadened their perspective about career options. One of our students did an internship with the North Carolina Emergency Management Office and is working for them now."

Ms. Tierra Blue, a senior Criminal Justice major at NCCU who completed the CERT course during her junior year said, "What sparked my interest to take the course was to know more about CERT so that I had more knowledge to

protect myself, my friends and family in case of emergency."

When the semester ended, the seniors who took the CERT course graduated. "The plan was to have this core group take the CERT training and then go into the community that summer and help develop a CERT presence," said Dr. McMurray, "but with the seniors graduating, there was no sustainability of the program. In the future, we may want to limit seniors and include more freshmen, sophomores and juniors so that there is continuity."

While Dr. McMurray hoped to continue offering a CERT course each semester, he said that "fiscal challenges have found their way to the university level but we hope to offer the training in the future."

Dr. McMurray is grateful to the North Carolina Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service for providing instructors and CERT kits to each student. "Without their support, this course would not have been possible."

Woodbridge CERT Responds to Hurricane Irene

When the Governor of New Jersey declared a State of Emergency on August 25, 2011, in anticipation of Hurricane Irene, Woodbridge CERT members were prepared to activate at a moment's notice. Two days later, as Irene prepared to make landfall in the southern part of the state, they got the call.

"We activated about 12 hours before the storm came," said Woodbridge CERT Coordinator Lowell Aube. They began by setting up and running a regional shelter

that accommodated locals and residents from nearby towns. "We took in 200 evacuees. We had a medical unit set up and tended to any injuries. We also had a trailer for animals because nobody wants to leave their pets behind."

“ I had members wading chest deep through water to carry residents to safety ”

—Lowell Aube, Woodbridge CERT Coordinator

He added that they "had two operational field teams that not only helped evacuate residents, but also stood guard over live power lines and helped out emergency vehicles that got stuck in deep standing water. I had members wading chest deep through water to carry residents to safety."

Mr. Aube admits that "we weren't prepared for the number of evacuees and we had no food. As luck would have it, one of my CERTs is a caterer

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Woodbridge CERT Responds to Hurricane Irene

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and had prepared food for a party that was cancelled due to the storm. She brought in the food. Our evacuees were quite surprised to have a catered meal. However, for breakfast the next day, we had to do some shuffling around.” Before the next emergency, he plans to establish a solid rapport with local supermarkets to provide food and water for future evacuees.

A point of pride for Mr. Aube during this activation was the participation of his 19-year-old son. “He joined CERT last year and this was his first event. He was out in the field with my deputy coordinator. I was worried about him as any parent would be. It’s hard to know your child might be in harm’s way but he made me proud. He is very active with the team and volunteers for all the training now. He is more committed,” he said.

“ We also had a trailer for animals because nobody wants to leave their pets behind. ”

–Lowell Aube, Woodbridge CERT Coordinator

His team worked for approximately 36 hours, some with little to no sleep. “We had an area of the shelter set up for the team to take naps if they wanted to,” said Mr. Aube, “but no one would go home until I went home. I have a very loyal group of people.”



Regional shelter set up by Woodbridge CERT during Hurricane Irene

Remember...

The main signs of shock include:

- Rapid and shallow breathing
- Capillary refill (blanche test) takes longer than 2 seconds
- Failure to follow simple commands, such as “Squeeze my hand”

FAQ:

Q: Can CERT be used in other countries?

A: CERT trains individuals in basic disaster response skills and this training may be beneficial regardless of what country you live in. CERT training materials and other tools are available at www.citizencorps.gov/cert. It is recommended that the CERT training, as well as team procedures and protocols, be established in coordination with your local government emergency services. Although programs outside of the United States are not eligible for U.S. Government grant funding, they are encouraged to register their program in the CERT Registry at <https://www.citizencorps.gov/cc/CertRegWizard.do>.

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For individuals or organizations outside of the United States that are interested in starting a CERT program and/or becoming a CERT instructor, training is available at FEMA's Emergency Management Institute (EMI). The Institute conducts the CERT Program Manager Course (E427) and Train-the-Trainer Course (E428) four times each year. U. S. citizens are given priority, but the Institute is open to international students. The EMI Course Schedule and course vacancies are posted on EMI's website (<http://training.fema.gov/EMI/>). Please email NETC-admissions@fema.dhs.gov for more information about additional requirements for international applicants.

Please be sure to direct all international inquiries about starting a CERT program to the National CERT Program Office 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 June 30, 2012. 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.