



# National NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2 – Issue 2

## Hamden, Conn., CERT Excels in Public Safety Officer Rehabilitation Role



The interior of the Hamden CERT's mobile command and rehab vehicle houses equipment that helps to keep professional responders warm or cool depending on the situation.

When emergency management officials in Hamden, Conn., began organizing a CERT in 2005, they placed great emphasis on training volunteers who could meet the city's needs without treading on the established roles of Hamden's unionized professional responders. From that early framework, the Hamden CERT's primary role has evolved to include public safety officer rehabilitation and on-scene victim care, and the city's public safety officers have come to acknowledge CERT volunteers as important partners during an emergency response.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## CERT Programs: Rural and Urban

Other than having active CERTs, Pendleton County, W.Va., and Detroit, Mich., wouldn't seem to have a lot in common. The former is rural and mountainous and has a population of 8,000. The latter is urban and flat and has a population of 800,000. Edna Mullenax, CERT coordinator in Pendleton County, and Susan Sanderson, CERT coordinator in Detroit, face challenges as different as the communities they call home. The following profiles reveal that the programs also have a few things in common.

### Sue Sanderson, City of Detroit CERT

When Sue Sanderson needs volunteers, she usually can find them. An emergency

*(Continued on page 4)*

## IN THIS ISSUE

HAMDEN, CONN., CERT EXCELS IN PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICER REHABILITATION ROLE	1
CERT PROGRAMS: RURAL AND URBAN	1
INDEPENDENCE, MO., CERT HELPS RESIDENTS GET THROUGH THE NIGHT	2
SUN CITY, S.C., CERT HELPS SENIORS STAY ACTIVE	4
TEEN CERT TRAINING CATCHES ON	6
GEORGIA CERT PROGRAMS SIMULATE MALL DISASTER DURING TWO-DAY JOINT EXERCISE	9
FAQs	10
HOW TO SUBMIT A STORY	11

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



NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS DIRECTORATE



## Independence, Mo., CERT Helps Residents Get Through the Night



*The Independence, MO CERT, pictured during another response, assisted residents in a 10-story apartment complex that was without power for several hours in February 2009.*

When Independence, Mo., Emergency Preparedness Manager Mark Widner activated the City’s CERT on February 5, 2009, for a power outage situation that was expected to last until the wee hours of the morning, he wasn’t sure how many volunteers to expect. After all, it was already 5 p.m. – on a Thursday. To Widner’s delight, the response was so overwhelming that he was forced to turn people away.

“It was the neatest thing that I’ve ever been involved with,” Widner said. “I couldn’t have been more proud of our CERT volunteers.”

The circumstances that led to the successful response began earlier in the day, when Widner received a call from a disabled resident in a 10-story apartment complex nearby. The woman was concerned about a scheduled power out-

age in the building that night, which she was told could last up to 6 hours. Widner, well aware that people tend to light candles when electricity isn’t available and that the apartment complex didn’t have a sprinkler system, saw the potential for a serious problem. He consulted with power company officials, who told him the maintenance was necessary and that performing the work overnight made the most logistical sense. The power would be shut off at 10 p.m. and restored at 4 a.m.

Not wanting to expend the City’s professional public safety resources, Widner decided to activate the Independence CERT, which boasts over 800 volunteers.

“We needed people to do fire watch,” Widner said. “We needed people in the hallways and people in the stairwells. There were a lot of residents in the building with known medical problems, and there was no generator backup power, so we needed people there.”

More than enough CERT members volunteered to help. Twenty-five volunteers met Widner at the apartment complex around 9:30 p.m. Chiefs from the Independence fire and police departments arrived to survey the situation.

“The CERT members organized themselves when they got there,” Widner said. “They set up their own incident command system; they coordinated with the fire department and police department. After a while, the fire chief said, ‘These guys are running this thing as well as we could.’”

Two CERT members were assigned to each floor, while five other members served as runners. The volunteers, who donned reflective vests and carried flashlights, assisted residents coming into the building and going up and down stairs. They occupied hallways and stairways and kept alert for any signs of a fire, using radios to communicate with CERT members stationed at the command post outside of the building.

“It was really a great activation,” Widner said. “It showed that these guys really can step in. I’ve never been prouder of a group of people in my life.”

“...these guys [CERTs] really can step in.”

– Mark Widner, Independence, Mo.,  
Emergency Preparedness Manager

## Hamden, Conn., CERT Excels in Public Safety Officer Rehabilitation Role *(Continued from page 1)*

“To have the CERTs come onboard doing something for the union, as opposed to doing something that might be perceived as trying to take part of their job, works really well,” said Hamden CERT Coordinator and Deputy Fire Marshal Clark Hurlburt, who helped to organize the Hamden CERT.

With 23 firefighters on shift prepared to respond to an emergency in a city of 60,000 at any given time, the organized rehabilitation services available to Hamden’s professional responders were severely lacking before the CERT was established.

“The concept was to develop missions for the CERTs to give them things to do,” Hurlburt said. “Every professional responder is committed to a fire here. It doesn’t leave people to do the type of rehab that we need. This is perfect for CERT.”

The tasks associated with public safety officer rehabilitation are broad, but Hurlburt said that keeping responders hydrated is the number one priority. Other aspects of the role include cooling and warming officers, which may be accomplished using more sophisticated equipment, such as a direct forearm immersion chair, or with a simple cup of hot coffee.

“*The more missions you have, the more interested you keep the people.*”  
– Deputy Fire Marshal Clark Hurlburt

In addition to the *CERT Basic Training* course, Hamden CERT members are provided specific training in rehabilitation services that Hurlburt has gleaned from seminars, his own research, and existing material, such as FEMA’s recently updated guide on firefighter rehabilitation. The Hamden CERT Program offers rehabilitation refresher training once a year.

One of the key components to the Hamden CERT’s rehabilitation role is the team’s multi-task response vehicle. A converted minibus that the City recycled in 2001, the vehicle is outfitted with state-of-the-art rehabilitation equipment and is deployed to all major incidents. The rehab team, which boasts about 60 active members, put the



*Hamden CERT members staff the team’s mobile command and rehab vehicle.*

vehicle to good use during a live-burn exercise conducted in 90-plus-degree heat in July 2008. CERT members used a variety of cooling techniques to keep firefighters’ core temperatures within prescribed limits.

While the Hamden CERT tends to be busier during the summer – the City hosts a series of concerts and Fourth of July fireworks – team volunteers responded to three fires in January and two in February this year. Word of the success of the program is spreading; two nearby towns have added the firefighter rehab role to their CERTs’ responsibilities.

“In most municipalities that I found, one thing that tends to lack is public safety rehab,” Hurlburt said. “A lot of times, it’s just kind of hit or miss.”

In addition to providing a valuable service to on-scene victims and professional first responders, Hurlburt said, the rehabilitation role is a recruitment tool for some volunteers.

“The more missions you have, the more interested you keep the people,” Hurlburt said. “You can’t just sit around and wait for the big one. It’s the local stuff that really keeps you going with it.”

For more information, please contact Clark Hurlburt at [churlburt@hamden.com](mailto:churlburt@hamden.com).

## Sun City, S.C., CERT Helps Seniors Stay Active

Jack Bennett, who moved to the senior independent living community of Sun City Hilton Head in South Carolina 13 years ago, is retired in name only. With the help and sponsorship of the Beaufort County Fire Department, the 40-year veteran of the California fire service established a CERT group for his neighbors in Sun City in August 2008 and organizes monthly in-service training sessions.

“CERT training started in California while I was there, so I kind of had it on my mind that I might try something like that,” said Bennett, who retired as assistant chief of the Los Angeles City Fire Department before serving as the fire chief for the Menlo Park Fire Department from 1985 to 1992.

“*Having exercises is how you learn the most.*”

– Jack Bennett,  
Sun City CERT Founder

Bennett put an ad in the Sun City community magazine to gauge interest in starting a CERT, and the response he received was encouraging. Twenty-five Sun City residents graduated in the first class, organized by Beaufort County CERT Coordinator Juli Dimitrov. Bennett said that most of the training is held in classrooms within Sun City.

While Sun City residents must be at least 55, and many are much older, the majority of them remain active.

“We have softball teams, golf teams, and swimmers,” Bennett said.

The Sun City CERT group boasts two retired nurses and two members who had previously received CERT training.

For them, the call-up exercises that Bennett has implemented are nothing new.

“Having exercises is how you learn the most,” Bennett said.

While the Sun City CERT hasn’t been activated, save for the exercises, Bennett is actively searching for ways for his fellow volunteers to apply their new skills.

The Beaufort County Fire Department is looking at creating a rehab unit using CERT volunteers. “We would respond to an incident and give the firefighters water, or hot coffee, or anything else they need. I’m trying to put that together right now. We’re rolling along and looking for ways that we can be helpful for anything that goes on.”



Members of the Sun City, S.C., CERT practice fire suppression techniques during an exercise in November 2008.

## CERT Programs: Rural and Urban *(Continued from page 1)*

management specialist and CERT coordinator for the City of Detroit, Sanderson estimates that 2,500 volunteers have received CERT training in Detroit and that about 1,000 of those volunteers are active. In fact, the number of people interested in taking the *CERT Basic Training* course in Detroit is so great that Sanderson has been forced to start a waiting list.

Once trained, Detroit CERT members have many non-emergency opportunities to apply their skills. Detroit hosts at least three major events every year: The North American International Auto Show arrives in January, the International Freedom Festival attracts more than one million visitors in late June, and the Thanksgiving Day parade has been a tradition since 1924. In addition to these annual events, Detroit CERT volunteers helped with crowd control and provided information and basic first aid to visitors at Super Bowl XL in 2006, the Red Bull Air Races in 2008, and the April 2009 NCAA basketball Final Four.

“We haven’t had a lot of bad weather or other emergency situations recently,” Sanderson said. “We’re fortunate that we have a lot of local community events that help us stay ready.”

Sanderson, who helped to administer the *CERT Basic Training* course provided to 400 police reserves before Super Bowl XL, has an exciting and equally challenging assignment for next year. She will attend the 2010 National Boy Scout Jamboree, where 400 to 500 Boy Scouts will receive CERT training.

*(Continued on page 5)*

## CERT Programs: Rural and Urban *(Continued from page 4)*

The Detroit CERT has continued to attract new volunteers, partly through the exposure that working events provides and also through Sanderson’s proactive approach in helping to introduce CERT to non-English speakers, the Arab community, teens, and churches in Detroit. She would eventually like to offer CERT training for members of the city’s media.

Managing volunteers is one of the most difficult aspects of coordinating a CERT Program in an urban community. Sanderson says Detroit is no different.

“We need to organize them better into



teams,” said Sanderson, who uses a software program to notify members on a distribution list in the event that an emergency or non-emergency response is needed. She is hoping to develop stronger organization and management of volunteers at the regional level.

During these tough economic times, the Detroit CERT is alive and well. “I’m very proud of our program,” Sanderson said.

### **Edna Mullenax, Pendleton County, W.Va., CERT Coordinator**

Edna Mullenax helped to launch the Pendleton County CERT in 2006. Since

then, the program has graduated approximately 50 members.

With just 8,000 residents to pull from, the resources and volunteers available to Mullenax are small compared to many other CERT programs but proportionally just as big. The Pendleton County CERT grew out of the established Franklin Citizen Corps group, and many of her volunteers remain actively involved in other programs.

**“I think we’re pretty successful for a small county.”**

*– Edna Mullenax  
Pendleton County,  
W.Va., CERT Coordinator*

“You have to decide what hat to wear right now,” said Mullenax, who works in the Pendleton County Office of Emergency Management. “I think we’re pretty successful for a small county. We manage to keep an active group, and we have people interested in our training, but we don’t really push the issue.”

While the Super Bowl won’t be coming to Pendleton County anytime soon, there’s plenty to keep the county’s CERT members busy. The CERT members, who meet once a month, have been activated several times over the past few years to help the Pendleton County Office of Emergency Management answer phones and do online reporting during weather-related emergencies. Members also write grants and support Mullenax with other initiatives, including CPR and National Incident Management System (NIMS) classes.

CERT members also pass out disaster preparedness materials during Pendle-

ton County’s Day of Remembrance in September and provide crowd control and administrative support during the annual Treasure Mountain Festival, which draws 5,000 to 8,000 visitors each year. Both events increase the team’s visibility in the community and help to attract new members

“It’s taken a little while for people to realize what CERT is and how they can be beneficial, but being out there in the public eye really helps,” Mullenax said. Like Sanderson, Mullenax faces the challenge of managing her CERT volunteers and organizing them into teams to ensure the most effective and efficient response in the event of an emergency.

Getting her CERT volunteers and the community to understand how CERT fits into the greater emergency response framework is another challenge for Mullenax. To that end, she helped to organize Pendleton County’s first Command School tabletop drill, which invited first responders from the police and fire departments, EMS, CERT, and the American Red Cross. In the future, Mullenax would like to host a CERT-specific drill.



## Teen CERT Training Catches On



Students at Cordova High School in Sacramento County, Calif., mark a building during a disaster simulation drill.

CERT training for high school students—“Teen CERT”—has been underway for a number of years. The basic training for Teen CERT participants is the standard *CERT Basic Training* course, but is intended to prepare students to help respond in the event of a school emergency. Training for Teen CERT instructors was developed by Eastern Michigan University (EMU) under a grant from FEMA in 2007, and CERT in high schools has continued to expand. From coast to coast, a growing number of schools and emergency response agencies empower today’s youth with the knowledge, confidence, and skills of CERT training. Five individuals from around the country who coordinate Teen CERT training shared some of their experiences with us.

“Kids talked to other kids, and once they got over the outfits and the dorky hats, as they call them, they saw there was a lot of benefit to it.”

– Brenda Gormley,  
Denton County,  
Texas, CERT Coordinator

Carol Willis, the Sacramento, Calif., Region Teen CERT coordinator, has helped to implement Teen CERT training in nine Sacramento-area schools since 2007. She presented information about Teen CERT training to school resource officers in Sacramento after attending EMU’s *Train-the-Trainer* course in 2007. The officers were recep-

tive to the idea, and Willis has since helped train hundreds of high school students in Sacramento.

Brenda Gormley, the CERT coordinator for Denton County, Texas, organized the first Teen CERT training at Denton’s Advanced Technology Complex in 2008 and has happily facilitated the expansion of the training as public schools in the county have expressed interest.

“From there, it exploded,” said Gormley, who has watched approximately 75 students graduate from the training. “Kids talked to other kids, and once they got over the outfits and the dorky hats, as they call them, they saw there was a lot of benefit to it.”

### Course Delivery

The format for delivery of the *CERT Basic Training* course to high school students varies from school to school.

“Whether they implement it into the curriculum, or offer it after school, or sometimes as a club with training on weekends, is up to the school,” said Willis, who indicated that the most common schedule in Sacramento includes three hours of training once a week for eight weeks.

At Lindbergh High School in St. Louis, Mo., 14 students recently graduated from the training, presented over three 8-hour sessions.

“I think that it was pretty successful,” said Lindbergh School District safety coordinator and lead nurse Deborah Artman, who coordinated the school’s first CERT training with the Mehlville Fire Protection District. “We’re possibly looking at breaking it down into smaller increments of time in the future so that the kids won’t be as tired.”

In Denton County, Gormley has experimented with several different formats for delivering the training and will try yet another format this year. All students interested in taking the CERT training will attend a CERT camp at the end of the summer. Throughout the ensuing school year, Teen CERT members will reinforce their skills through activities.

At Milan High School in Michigan, CERT training has been offered once a year for the past five years as an extracurricular activity during student resource time, a 1 ½ -hour block built into a student’s weekly schedule. Assistant principal

## Teen CERT Training Catches On *(Continued from page 6)*

Leanna Soltis identifies students to participate in the training and typically selects only students with strong academic track records, as these are the students who are less likely to need student resource time to meet with teachers or tutors.

“I try to have a variety of kids involved from different cliques and circles throughout the school,” said Soltis, who rarely turns down a student who comes to her independently and expresses interest in taking the training.

Daniel Hahn, the emergency management plans chief for Santa Rosa County in Florida’s panhandle, initially offered CERT training to teens through the local 4-H club. This year, Pace High School offered the training through its student government program.

“*I try to have a variety of kids involved from different cliques and circles throughout the school.*”

– *Leanna Soltis, Assistant Principal, Milan High School, Mich.*

“It was a wonderful success,” Hahn said. Consistent with the *CERT Basic Training* course, the training for high school students concludes with a disaster simulation. This, too, varies by school, depending on the resources and time available. Soltis runs a simulation drill at Milan High School that is unannounced to the students. Past simulations have included a bleacher collapse, a boiler explosion, and a bus accident in the



*Milan High School students help victims evacuate a school bus as part of a disaster simulation drill.*

school parking lot. In Denton County, Gormley organized a disaster simulation in January at Argyle High School that was attended by the assistant chief of Denton County Emergency Services.

### Distinct Teaching Style

The challenge of keeping the attention of a class of students for hours at a time demands a teaching style that is different from the one used to teach adults in the CERT Basic Training course.

“We have to have lots of hands-on,” Carol Willis said. “We have to keep them involved. They’ll fall asleep in class more easily than adults.”

In addition to making the training more engaging with hands-on activities, Soltis said it’s important to recognize students who take the CERT training during school assemblies, while Gormley suggested that instructors take an active

interest in their students’ lives.

“You have to be aware of what’s going on in their lives,” Gormley said. “With most kids, you have to know that a student had to work until 11:30 and then get up the next morning at 6. You’ve got to be the adult, but you’ve also got to be the friend.”

Along the same lines, Gormley said, it’s important for instructors to be patient with their students, especially when it seems as if they’re not paying attention.

“Don’t get discouraged,” Gormley said. “When you do the drill and you see they did everything that you taught them, it’s well worth it. Don’t give up on your kids.”

### Successes

One of the most rewarding aspects of Teen CERT training for Soltis has been

*(Continued on page 8)*

## Teen CERT Training Catches On *(Continued from page 7)*

watching her students put their training to good use.

“My kids actually support our emergency management during fire drills here at school,” Soltis said. “They will check the building and make sure everyone’s in position and out of the building.”

Many of Soltis’ students are interested in pursuing careers as professional first responders and go on to receive CPR, AED, and first aid training, all of which fall outside the realm of the *CERT Basic Training* course. “We have a core group of kids who have had their interests stirred, and they emerge as leaders,” said Soltis, who counts firefighters and nurses among her past Teen CERT graduates.

Parental involvement is another important component of Teen CERT success throughout the country.

Carol Willis hopes that Teen CERT training will help make the students’ parents more aware of the importance of being prepared for a disaster. Part of the students’ homework for the first class is to go home and find out where the gas and electrical shutoffs are in their homes, and to discuss an emergency preparedness plan with their parents. “We have a parent meeting prior to each class and show a brief PowerPoint about what the students are going to learn,” said Willis.

For the training at Lindbergh High School in St. Louis, a parent of a student in Deborah Artman’s class helped to teach the disaster psychology lesson of the training.

“We ask kids to discuss an emergency plan with their parents,” Gormley said.

“We also invite the parents to come in and take the class with them.”

### Advice and Future Goals

For those looking to establish Teen CERT training in their own areas, there’s no shortage of advice to go around.

To stay involved with the schools where she has already implemented CERT training courses in the Sacramento area, Willis publishes a Teen CERT newsletter and keeps an e-mail list of all the teachers in the high schools that offer the CERT training. Willis keeps a separate e-mail list of students and has designed T-shirts with the CERT logo on the front and the individual school logo on the sleeve.

Garnering the support of local administrators and emergency response personnel is important to the success of Teen CERT training in any community.

“Getting the board of education, administrators, and public information officers involved is a necessity,” Artman said. “It’s important to get the information about

Teen CERT out to the community and let them know what we’re doing.”

During what can be a difficult process, Santa Rosa County’s Daniel Hahn stressed the importance of perseverance.

“You’re going to be told ‘no’ a lot,” Hahn said. “But someone out there will accept the training. It might be the Boy Scouts or a 4-H club, but if you get your fingers into the community, the training will spread.”

Gormley believes that teens are the next generation of community leaders and emergency responders. And if she had her way, CERT training for teens would spread to every school district in the country. “They’re our future,” Gormley said. “What better way to prepare them?”

**“You’re going to be told ‘no’ a lot. But someone out there will accept the training.”**

*– Daniel Hahn, emergency management plans chief, Santa Rosa County, Fla.*



*With the help of the Mehlville Fire Protection District, students at Lindbergh High School in St. Louis completed the CERT Basic Training course in April 2009.*



## Georgia CERT Programs Simulate Mall Disaster During 2-Day Joint Exercise

If CERTs need to be activated in response to a tornado or severe thunderstorm in the greater Atlanta metropolitan area this summer, four local programs will have a better idea of what to expect. On January 24-25, 2009, Georgia CERTs from Atlanta, Alpharetta, College Park, and Fulton County participated in a joint exercise that began with refresher training and culminated in a day-long simulation of an emergency response at the Fulton County Fire Academy.

About 75 CERT members from the four programs gathered at the Atlanta Fire Academy on Saturday to participate in refresher training. CERT members spent the day rotating through classes related to search and rescue in order to re-familiarize themselves with the skills that they would need for Sunday's disaster simulation.

On Sunday, buses transported CERT members to the Fulton County Fire Academy. About 100 volunteers, including Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, were moulaged to appear injured and placed throughout the building. For the purposes of the simulation, these volunteers represented shoppers who were trapped inside a mall damaged by severe thunderstorms that had spawned tornadoes. CERT members were briefed before the exercise about the circumstances that led to their activation: With Atlanta's professional public safety personnel already committed to other areas of the city, Fulton County mobilized its CERT and asked for assistance from the other three local CERT programs.



*CERT members help carry a man using a two-person lift during a disaster simulation in Atlanta in January 2009.*



*CERT volunteers practice moving a victim on a stretcher during the disaster simulation. About 75 CERT members from four local programs participated in the exercise.*

Throughout the 7-hour exercise, CERT members had the opportunity to practice putting out a live fire and extricating and transporting victims with various simulated injuries, including leg fractures and broken arms. CERT coordinators from the four programs observed and provided feedback as necessary.

"We were all evaluators, plus we were acting as safety also," said Lt. Gary Robinson, the Alpharetta CERT coordinator and a member of the Alpharetta Fire Department. "If we saw something that wasn't right, we would correct it so nobody would get hurt."

For the most part, CERT coordinators – Robinson, Bernard Coxtton (Atlanta), Kevin Harris (College Park), and Natalie Riggs (Fulton County) – didn't need to intervene.

"We were so proud of the way they performed," Robinson said. "It was just magnificent. They did an absolutely excellent job. To give up an entire weekend away from their family really shows their dedication."

The idea for the joint exercise came out of discussions that leaders from each program had during their monthly meetings, which they first held in July 2008. This was the first joint exercise of its kind for CERTs in the Atlanta area, but Robinson said that officials from all four programs have already begun talking about hosting a similar exercise later this year.

## FAQ

**Q:** How do CERT members maintain their skills?

**A:** CERT members and the emergency response agency that sponsors the local CERT program work together to maintain individual and team skills learned in the *CERT Basic Training* course. Many local programs conduct refresher training for those who have completed the *Basic Training* course. This provides an opportunity for team members to brush up on their knowledge and skills, especially skills that are rarely used and practiced infrequently. Medical triage is a good example. One of the easiest ways to get or provide refresher training is for program participants to sit in on modules of the *CERT Basic Training* course they've completed when those modules are being conducted for a new group of trainees. Be sure to contact the CERT program coordinator if you'd like to "drop in for a refresher." The coordinator can confirm the date(s) the module will be conducted and that there will be room.

Refresher training combined with an exercise or drill is another popular way to help CERT members maintain their skills. To make the event even more interesting, some agencies hold joint events for CERTs from a number of local programs in the region and share the responsibilities of conducting the refresher training and exercise. Following refresher presentations, the teams rotate through a series of skill drills for hands-on practice. Add an element of friendly competition, and you have a CERT "Rodeo," "Olympics," or "Challenge." Whether or not the event is competitive, it's important to have evaluators present to provide each team with helpful feedback.

A version of CERT exercises, sometimes called "exercise swaps," is another way to maintain individual and team skills. Exercise swaps rely on the teams themselves to conduct exercises for each other. Under direction of the sponsoring agency, two teams receive basic training in exercise design, then design and conduct exercises for each other. Exercise swaps allow each team to determine the objectives of its exercise (e.g., "Our team really needs to get more practice on setting up a medical treatment area and on establishing communication among team members.") and can allow for a neighborhood CERT to go through an exercise in its own neighborhood. The other team has the same opportunities when the swap occurs (usually a few months later). Typically, the team that designs and conducts the exercise learns as much as the team that goes through it. Remember that basic training on exercise design and oversight by the agency that operates the local CERT program are prerequisites for a successful exercise swap.

Last but not least, CERT members can maintain and strengthen organizational skills by using them on a regular basis. For example, when a local team organizes any non-emergency activity, the team can use the Incident Command System (ICS) to manage its work. The application of ICS to any multi-faceted task (such as putting on a fundraising event or organizing neighborhood participation in the local emergency preparedness campaign) will provide great practical experience and help make ICS more familiar.

There are also some great ideas and practices to help expand CERT members' skills. Suggestions about supplemental skills for individuals and teams will be covered in a future FAQ.



## 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 August 31, 2009. Send your articles to [cert@dhs.gov](mailto: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.