

Community Service Gives CERTs Chance to Shine



CERT volunteers talk with people about emergency preparedness at a fair in Sunrise, Fla. (Photo courtesy of Sunrise CERT.)

Let's say you've got a committed team of people who have all taken CERT Basic Training and are ready to help with any necessary action in your community during a disaster. But you say you have no hurricanes this week? No earthquakes, floods, or tornadoes? There is still plenty of important work that CERTs can do even when they are not being activated during emergency situations. We have gathered ideas from CERT programs across the country to illustrate the opportunities that are possible to make the most of the incredible human resources brought together through the CERT Program even when there is no immediate danger to the community.

Providing Opportunities for Service, Training, and Marketing with Fairs and Parades

Many CERT programs use their team members to work at county fairs, local parades, community festivals, and a host of other community events. They staff information tables and hand out brochures on CERT and on general emergency preparedness. They don Smokey the Bear costumes and provide awareness about fire safety. They give water bottles to participants at races and air shows. They drive senior citizens and people with physical challenges from parking lots in golf carts. They staff mobile emergency command vehicles and answer questions about the Program from the curious. They provide traffic control, line up parade participants, make sure pedestrians stay behind safety lines, and serve

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as additional “eyes and ears” for the police or fire department personnel providing event security.

“[At our county fair], we provide pedestrian safety on the fairgrounds, some traffic control, and some midway observation to make sure walkways are kept open,” said Lynne Campbell, who heads Michigan’s Lansing-Ingham County CERT. “We’re there to be extra eyes for the police. We don’t get into any action if it’s a police issue, but we can call for assistance.”

Staffing fairs, festivals, and parades not only provides an important public safety service, but allows CERT members to practice skills learned in training, such as searching for lost persons in an orderly fashion, using ICS, providing perimeter control, and doing basic first aid. “We have a lot more public service than we do emergency service, so we look at that as a training opportunity for teambuilding in case we do get a call for activation,” agreed Campbell. “It’s pretty rare that kids or families don’t get separated from each other, so our CERT members work to unify families...If we’re looking at our ultimate goal of being ready and available, all of these situations that deal with crowds, handling people, working with people, get our skills really developed...and broaden our ability to keep our community safe at all these events.”

The CERT presence at community events provides marketing for the program and the larger message of emergency preparedness as well. “We don’t have a lot of disasters in Michigan, so individuals go out and march in parades, promoting CERT and the message of preparedness,” said Kevin Sweeney, who is Michigan’s state-level point of contact for the program. “From our website, I can watch our traffic spike right after a festival,” noted Sweeney, who estimated getting as many as seven or eight new CERT members after every community event in which his teams had a presence. “People come in and say, ‘What is that green vest, and what is that logo?’” said Jean Paras, who heads the Waldwick, N.J. CERT, of the response she receives when her members staff tables at community events.



CERT volunteers help update lists of vulnerable citizens in the community. (Photo courtesy of Sunrise CERT.)

In addition to fairs, parades, and agricultural festivals, there are many other types of community events for which CERTs provide additional security or use as a springboard to promote both the program and the larger message of emergency preparedness:

- Minor league baseball games
- High school or college sporting events or graduations
- Running races for charitable causes
- Concerts and music festivals
- Car, airplane, or boat shows
- Events for children’s school safety patrols
- Community recycling events
- Elections
- Police ‘Night Out’ celebrations
- Safety days sponsored by home improvement stores

“The more you’re out there, the more you’re accepted,” said Dan Spangler, who is the Huron Township, Mich. CERT coordinator. “The goal is to touch as many people as we possibly can.”

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Extending the Reach of Professional Responders

In addition to assisting police and fire departments by providing additional security at community events, CERTs provide community service by extending the reach of professional responders in a variety of ways, from assisting in small-scale emergencies to providing victims for hospital emergency drills, to helping with crime-fighting and emergency preparedness initiatives.

It doesn't always take a formal activation to get CERT members on the ground and ready to lend a helping hand. Sometimes CERT members take it upon themselves to help with small-scale problems in the



A CERT member in Michigan sorts through donated toys as part of her program's involvement with the Rotary's Goodfellows program. (Photo courtesy of Huron Township CERT.)

aftermath of minor flooding and wind-storms. "We put our CERT group on standby to check on rural residents... and they helped an elderly woman whose basement had flooded," reported Sandy Rollins, emergency coordinator for the

Latah County, Idaho CERT. Jackie Frey, who coordinates the Twin Falls, Idaho CERT, confirmed that CERTs fill an especially important community service role in rural areas. "We don't have a lot of issues with disasters here, but our CERT members will help senior citizens clean up their yards after wind storms," said Frey. "It's a blessing they're there."

Other CERTs have participated in neighborhood mapping projects to identify potential hazards and the residents who might be most vulnerable in an emergency. "Our CERT volunteers have been critical for our 'Neighborhood Mapping Project' project," said Jackie Frey. Tricia Granfors, who coordinates the Westshore Regional CERT in Ohio, noted that she recently started a SafetyNet program especially for people who have physical or mental challenges, and that she had her CERT members help to compile this confidential database for responders to check in the event of an emergency. Juan Farach, who coordinates the CERT program for the city of Sunrise, Fla., has his CERT members participate in a similar preparedness effort. "Our CERT members called people on our vulnerable population registry to update their information," he said.

Bolstering Public Health Efforts

Several CERTs have also extended the reach of government health services by offering valuable logistical and administrative help for public health efforts in a number of states, such as health and dental clinics,

vaccination centers, community health fairs, and other special projects.

The CERT members of Sunrise, Fla. were among many CERTs nationwide that helped provide support for H1N1 influenza vaccinations. "We wanted to make sure that we would be able to deliver this service to the county," said Farach, so CERT members helped the clinic's operations. "They were not involved in the medical part, but in the screening and reception areas," he said. "Our CERT members provided 44% of the hours needed to staff the clinic," he continued. "It would have cost us twice as much without them."

Lynn Campbell's CERT members provided traffic control to another H1N1 effort at 10 clinics in the Lansing, Mich. area, while Tricia Granfors noted that her CERT provided similar support to a program called "Operation Medicine Chest", in which community members dropped off unwanted prescription medicine for safe disposal.

Assisting with Other Groups' Community Service Projects

CERT community service includes providing assistance to the good works of other organizations, said coordinators.

Farach noted that his CERTs have assisted with food collection efforts for Haitian disaster relief efforts, while Campbell said she asks her CERT members to bring food for donations for the local food bank to their regular meetings.

Other CERTs have reported helping with diaper and toy drives. Dan Spangler

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said his CERT is active in the Rotary Club's Goodfellows Christmas toy and food basket drive. "The main motto is 'no child without a Christmas,' so we put a lot of hours into that." This year, his team contributed 135 hours to organize and deliver baskets of cheer to low-income families and others without the means to shop for themselves. "It's really fun," he said. "It's a team-building exercise for us because we learn how to operate together. It's really a training of sorts for us."

Spreading the Word About CERT and Emergency Preparedness

To help get the word out about their program and the importance of preparing for disasters, many CERT programs perform community service by proactively meeting with schools and community groups.

Daniel Hahn, who coordinates the Santa Rosa County CERT in Fla., said he encourages his members to speak at local service groups, such as Kiwanis International and Rotary International, to talk about CERT. He also links CERT instructors with local schools to go into classrooms and promote emergency preparedness. He noted that one of his team members regularly visits local homeowners associations to educate them about how to prepare for disasters.

Lynn Campbell noted that the Lansing Ingham County CERT provides a CERT speakers bureau to go to Rotary and senior centers to talk about emergency and disaster preparedness. "We're trying to encourage the community to think about emergency management."



CERT members prepare to greet the public at the Applefest in Huron Township, Mich. (Photo courtesy of Huron Township CERT.)

Making Community Service Run Smoothly

Several CERT coordinators shared tips for making their community service efforts a success.

Fire and police departments sometimes lack awareness of how CERTs can help them for routine functions. "It was an education process," said Rollins. "I met with all the fire departments and all the city halls and told them we can't go above our training skills, but that we do traffic control, tracking, and first aid...now they're the ones asking us to help!"

Getting busy CERT volunteers to make time for community service projects on top of training drills, meetings, and actual activations is

another challenge programs may face. "Sometimes we have to do a little begging," said Campbell, "but, really, we have a pretty decent response."

Frey advocated feeding volunteers who show up for any community service event as a means of thanking them for their time and service. "If you feed them, they will come," she joked. "You can't thank them enough."

Programs should carefully match CERT members' capabilities with community service needs. For example, senior citizens might be more comfortable staffing a phone bank in an office than standing in the hot sun handing out water bottles at a race. And very rarely, certain CERT

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Community Service Gives CERTs Chance to Shine

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A CERT volunteer dresses as Smokey the Bear to educate children about fire safety in Idaho. (Photo courtesy of Latah County CERT.)

members may be unsuitable to represent the program to the community at large. If this happens, said Frey, “I think, ‘Where else can I use them?’”

Benefiting Community and CERT Programs through Service

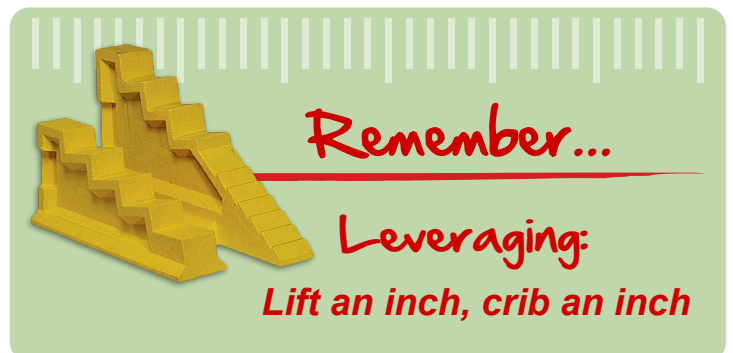
Despite the small challenges, using CERTs for community service has enormous benefits for the community and for CERT programs. According to the many CERT coordinators we spoke to, CERT community service:

- **Spreads the message of emergency preparedness.** Community members talking with other community members is a very effective way to get out the word. “The benefit is in bringing awareness to the community by us being out there and making them aware of the potential disasters that could affect us,” said Spangler. “By us being out there, people start wondering and asking questions.”
- **Builds community.** CERT community service “builds social capital...and will assist in creating a more resilient community,” said Hahn.
- **Promotes CERT team-building.** After doing community service together, “you feel more comfortable with your team and see familiar faces when there is a real emergency,” said Paras.
- **Keeps people engaged in CERT program between trainings and emergencies.** “Community

service work helps keep the team active,” noted Brad Smith, who is a captain with the Dearborn, Mich. fire department and one of the city’s emergency management coordinators. “They get to practice the things we’ve learned, such as the incident command structure, and they get to give back to their community. We test them. If you don’t utilize them for small things, you’re not going to get them for the big things, either.”

- **Provides human resources to stretched fire and law enforcement staff.** “There are lots of situations where you don’t necessarily need people with a badge,” confirmed Farach. “About 85% of those situations can be managed by trained volunteers if they have the right tools. People want to help.”
- **Exposes the community to CERT.** “We need for them to know who we are, that we’re here, and that we can help them in an emergency,” said Granfors.
- **Helps with recruitment.** “The big thing is they’re promoting the message of preparedness and volunteerism when a CERT group goes into a school or a parade,” said Sweeney. “They’re letting other citizens know that if you’d like to come and help, we’d love to have you. It’s making our state more prepared.”

The greatest contribution of CERT is the realization that community service is fun and worth doing for its own sake. “A lot of these people like to get out and work with people,” noted Campbell. “It’s serious, but can be a lot of fun. Volunteerism is such an important component of our society, and our CERT members feel that same way and want to get out there and help. It makes us feel good and does good things for our community. Everyone benefits.”



Campus CERT Builds on the Shake-Out Exercise



*A CERT member practices a head-to-toe assessment on a volunteer "victim."
(Photo courtesy of PCC CERT.)*

Earthquakes are a fact of life for many Americans, but how many people are really prepared to deal with a major quake if it happens? To help educate the public about ways to protect themselves during a large earthquake, local communities and states have been holding annual Shake-Out drills in California, Oregon, and Washington since 2008. This is done by working in conjunction with entities like Federal Emergency Management Agency, the U.S. Geological Survey, The American Red Cross, and regional earthquake consortia such as the Southern California Earthquake Center. The CERT at Pasadena Community College (PCC) was one of many CERTs around the state that participated in the California statewide drill in October 2010. They used the state Shake-Out event to design and conduct a full-scale exercise.

"We put on a full-scale exercise with very expanded simulations," said Lt. Brad Young, who works for the campus

police department and coordinates the PCC CERT. Taking advantage of a multi-story building on campus scheduled for demolition, Young received permission to use the building for the drill and worked with several academic departments to create

“ I think the exercise causes people to take it seriously. It’s the Super Bowl of CERT training. ”

– Lt. Brad Young

a realistic interpretation of how an earthquake-damaged building might look, feel, smell, and even sound like. With the help of the theater department, Young had the building pumped with simulated smoke. From the music department, he used huge amplifiers with “bass tones so loud, the windows shook.” Actors painted with fake blood were “trapped” under debris so CERT members could practice their search and rescue skills. He arranged a blackout in the entire building so there would be no electricity. “The simulation couldn’t have gotten any better,” said Young. “We were operating with flashlights and touch-and-feel... The resources were all here; we just needed to organize them.”

Despite the primitive conditions, Young’s CERT set up a triage area and even a makeshift morgue in accordance with their CERT training. “It was clearly a full-scale operation,” said Young, noting that even the local fire department staff that participated with him in the drill “was quite impressed.”

PCC’s 20 CERT members were divided into teams, with professors

paired with carpenters, plumbers, security personnel, or other employees who knew the school facility well. “You need people who have a campus-wide knowledge of campus structures and security, knowledge of where water lines, gas lines, and electricity are if we needed to shut down any of those things...You have to have those with that knowledge to really be self-sufficient in times of emergency,” he said. (Students are not typically part of PCC’s CERT because as it is a community college, most students live off-campus.)

Young credited PCC for taking emergency preparations so seriously. The college has invested in 40-foot steel storage boxes to hold emergency supplies, including water, non-perishable food, first aid supplies, portable sleeping equipment, lighting, generators, and such emergency tools as sledge hammers, picks, axes, and Jaws of Life. The college supported the simulation by paying for its employees to attend emergency training and participate in drills. Prior to the exercise, the college also sent out information to all professors and staff, as students were required to “drop, cover, and hold on” in their classrooms as part of the drill. “Here, the challenge is that we’re working around the education process while trying to simulate a complete disaster,” noted Young.

Young said that even CERTs without the extensive resources in a university setting could run realistic disaster training scenarios by working with their local fire academy. These facilities, used to train firefighters and other first responders, may be

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Campus CERT Builds on the Shake-Out Exercise

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*Inventory preparation before an exercise.
(Photo courtesy of PCC CERT.)*

available to CERT programs. “They have structures and buildings that they use to simulate fire situations,” said Young. “They have a lot of equipment that remains there—ladder, ropes, gurneys—and most fire departments are more than happy to help train you.”

All CERTs should consider running advanced disaster simulations like the one at PCC, said Young, regardless of whether they are in an earthquake-prone area. “I think the exercise causes people to take it seriously,” said Young. “It’s the Super Bowl of CERT training. It keeps the participants motivated.”

Denver CERT Builds Success Through Partnerships

Imagine having a corps of thousands of fully trained CERT members at the ready to help with your city’s emergency response efforts. Think it’s not possible? Think again! By actively building a huge range of community partnerships, the Denver CERT Program now boasts over 1,600 active CERT members.

Denver’s Office of Emergency Management (OEM) partners with a wide variety of local groups to conduct training. The groups provide space and publicity for the training, while OEM provides the trainers and training materials through their Federal grant funding. Some of the more unusual partnerships and training locations have included:

- Denver International Airport
- Pepsi Center sports arena
- Qwest phone company’s downtown headquarters
- Colorado Muslim Society
- St. Cajetan Catholic Church
- Denver Jewish Community Center
- Denver Indian Center
- Center for African American Health
- Colorado Asian Health Education and Promotion
- Retired Seniors Volunteer Program
- Denver Commission for Disabilities

“We look to train the little communities within our community,” said Carolyn Bluhm, who is the Denver OEM’s Community Relations Specialist.

The partnerships with the CERT program have lasted well beyond the initial training, said Bluhm. She noted, for example, that after providing the Basic CERT Training to members of the largely Latino St. Cajetan Catholic Church, there was enough interest among the people trained to offer CERT Train-the-Trainer training to several congregation leaders. The church now has an active team of 65 CERT members who have helped provide public safety assistance at community events, such as fairs and pilgrimages conducted along local roadways.

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Denver CERT Builds Success Through Partnerships

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Denver CERT partnered with the Denver International Airport parking security. (Photo courtesy of Denver CERT Program.)

How were they able to find such a wide range of community partners? Bluhm offered her tips below for programs looking to broaden their partnerships.

Get Out of the Office to Market the Program

“We believe in building partnerships outside the office,” Bluhm said, noting that the most fruitful contacts are often the ones made face-to-face. Building on her pre-emergency management career as an insurance agent, which relied heavily on sales and marketing, she proactively seeks out one-on-one meetings with a variety of local groups and community leaders. “Marketing and sales and presentations are part of my nature,” she said. Bluhm also credited her supervisors with giving her free rein to leave the office whenever necessary to conduct meetings and training.

Find the Leaders

Meeting with the right people is crucial to building partnerships because convincing the leaders of any group about

the value of CERT is key to obtaining participation for the rest of the group’s members. Noting that she once had difficulty in bringing Hispanic members into CERT training, “as soon as the Catholic Church got behind it, they showed up...Develop a network of people of influence,” said Bluhm. “Find the leaders, and they’ll make things happen.”

Sometimes it can be hard at first to figure out who those right people are, but Bluhm said that she looks for an action orientation and for those who seem eager to get something set up. “Go after the place of least resistance, and look for people who want to work to do something,” she advised.

Involving leaders from within a given community is also especially useful when there are language barriers or cultural differences. Leaders from a given community may be able to assist with translating CERT training materials or provide tips to get across CERT concepts in ways that

are sensitive to the community’s values, such as with the medical size-up section in the CERT Basic Training. “The ones who were in the training were the leaders, so you teach them, and they go out and teach others. They teach the material without offending their culture,” said Bluhm.

Think Creatively about Potential Audiences

The Denver CERT Program also actively seeks unconventional ways to market CERT programs where people work, worship, and live. Noting that there are 13,000 city employees in Denver and many additional thousands of Federal employees—many of whom have no training in emergency response—the program has begun publicizing CERT training for these public employees. These efforts have led to training sessions for Denver Public Library staff and for civilian spouses of deployed military personnel.

In another example of creative partnering, she learned that one of the CERT trainees was in charge of parking lot security at Denver International Airport. She worked with this person to not only provide CERT Basic Training for the rest of the parking lot staff, but for food vendor staff on the airport concourses as well.

Bluhm also described a recent effort to train employees in the Qwest headquarters building in downtown Denver as another especially exciting partnership. This kind of workplace-based training is important because it, “benefits the person as an employee, since they are now trained in a facility downtown, and as a community member because they are also now trained when they go home to their neighborhoods.”

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Denver CERT Builds Success Through Partnerships

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Provide Appropriate Resources

Partnering with organizations that serve special populations sometimes requires creativity and planning. The CERT National Program Office has recently released CERT training videos with Spanish subtitles and the CERT Basic Training materials are also being translated into Spanish. This includes the Participant Manual, Instructor Guide, and PowerPoint files. CERT training materials may still have to be translated into other languages. While this can sometimes be done at minimal cost through the help of volunteers, there are occasionally significant costs to

be budgeted. Bluhm noted that she recently spent \$5,000 to provide sign language interpreters to a CERT Basic Training session for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

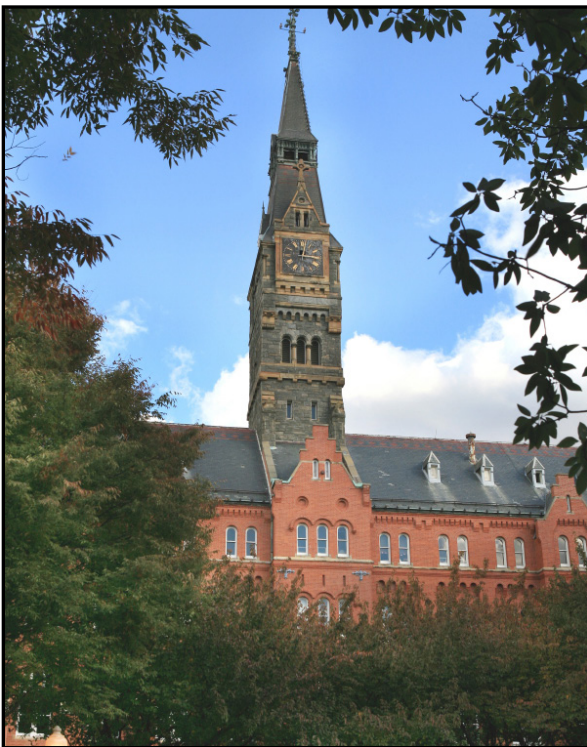
However, other organizations may sometimes have resources to offer as well. Churches and synagogues will often offer free space for CERT training, as well as publicity, while other government agencies might be interested in partnering to fund training for various underserved populations. Bluhm said that some of her earliest CERT partnering efforts were jointly funded with Denver's

Department of Health.

Be Patient

Bluhm counseled patience for those CERT program coordinators who want to broaden their partnerships and reach new populations. She often needs to provide short presentations on the need for emergency preparedness before being asked to come in to provide a full CERT Basic Training session, and it is not unheard of for someone she contacted a year or two before to suddenly call her to set up a training. "You plant little seeds everywhere, and you watch them grow," Bluhm advised. "You have to be very patient."

Georgetown University Leads Collaborative Effort for Washington, D.C. Campus CERTs



Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

Experiencing college life in the nation's capital already offers many unique opportunities. Whether passing a presidential motorcade on the way to class or frequenting the same coffee shop as a senator, students, faculty, and staff witness history unfold in their backyards. Georgetown University is now offering another unique opportunity: CERT training. And the offering extends across their vast backyard to colleges and universities across Washington, D.C.

In 2009, Georgetown's Department of Emergency Management and Operational Continuity (DEMOC) was awarded an Emergency Management for Higher Education (EMHE) Grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Among the provisions of the grant was a directive to provide Campus CERT (C-CERT) training to at least 100 Georgetown students, faculty, and staff members.

During the early stages of the program's development, DEMOC learned that other schools were also interested in pursuing CERT training for their employees and students. The schools were part of the Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area, a non-profit organization comprised of twelve universities and two colleges in the greater D.C. area. The schools work together to pool their resources and pursue common goals, including disaster preparedness.

At a meeting of the Consortium's Emergency Management Sub-Committee, DEMOC learned more about the District of Columbia's CERT

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Georgetown University Leads Collaborative Effort for Washington, D.C. Campus CERTs

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program in a presentation by Program Officer Shirley Hall. They also described their own plans to establish a CERT at Georgetown. The D.C. CERT agreed to provide trainers drawn from the District of Columbia's Fire Department, as well as CERT vests, helmets, and backpacks — complete with supplies — free to all participants.

During subsequent meetings of key stakeholders, Georgetown agreed to utilize its EMHE Grant to take the lead in establishing C-CERT training at D.C.'s institutions of higher learning. This initiative would also serve as a pilot program for other universities and colleges interested in creating C-CERT programs of their own.

The training, originally intended exclusively for Georgetown students and personnel, would now be offered to all Consortium members. Ultimately, six schools—Howard University, The George Washington University, The Catholic University of America, American University, Trinity University, and Gallaudet University—expressed interest and agreed to send participants to the Georgetown-hosted sessions throughout the year. Georgetown also drafted a proposal for

future collaboration with the other members of the Consortium on CERT and other emergency management issues.

As host, Georgetown would provide the facilities and refreshments for four training sessions in September, November, January, and February of 2010 and 2011. They would also develop and present a new curriculum module designed to address the specific nuances of establishing and maintaining C-CERT training in a campus environment.

DEMOC led efforts to create policy that would illustrate the relevance of CERT in a campus environment and provide smart practices on program development. They would draw from their own experiences in establishing its C-CERT trainer training. DEMOC contacted the National CERT Office for guidance as well as other higher education institutions to learn about their experiences, including Michigan State University, who had previously developed C-CERT trainer training.

In order to anticipate and prepare for any difficulties in developing a program, DEMOC was particularly interested in the obstacles other schools had faced and how they resolved them. Perhaps the most common problem faced by C-CERT organizations was the sustainability of the program once it had been established. There were two primary causes that led to the decline of C-CERT programs at other institutions:

- **Lack of engagement.** For many participants, their involvement with the organization ended with the completion of their basic training in the absence of further opportunities to practice and develop their skills.
- **Lack of independent funding.** Some organizations fell apart once the funds from the original grant and/or internal funding were exhausted. This affected the ability to engage and maintain members.

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Remember...

The Three "Killers"

1 **Airway
Obstruction**

2 **Excessive
Bleeding**

3 **Shock**



Georgetown University Leads Collaborative Effort for Washington, D.C. Campus CERTs *(Continued from page 10)*

While these are issues that CERTs across the country often face, a C-CERT must also contend with the yearly change in their volunteer force. Upon graduation, students take their C-CERT training with them, resulting in dwindling numbers of CERT-trained individuals on campus. But as a result of this research, Georgetown made it one of its first priorities to establish a C-CERT program that would be sustainable in terms of both finances and personnel.

Another common problem for C-CERT Programs was the issue of legal liability. To address the complicated matter, DEMOC met with Georgetown's legal counsel early in the development of the program. Counsel determined that D.C.'s Good Samaritan Act protected C-CERT participants, provided that they acted within the confines of their training. Georgetown also chose to request that all participants sign a legal waiver for further protection.

The next step was to meet with Georgetown's Office of Human Resources and Office of Risk Management in order to outline the responsibilities, expectations, and restrictions of participating Georgetown students and personnel, including protocols for activation and deployment. To that end, DEMOC drafted an Application and Directive to be completed and signed by all participants prior to enrollment in the CERT training.

After their research, DEMOC issued the new policy to be used in establishing and maintaining the University's Campus CERT. This policy:

- Documented the lessons learned in addressing human resources, risk management, and legal matters.
- Provided a model so that other universities might

benefit from its experiences.

- Detailed a strategy for achieving sustainability. Among other recommendations, this included proposing various means of raising funds and lowering costs and calling for additional training sessions, exercises, and activities to engage CERT members.
- Featured case studies to illustrate how CERT had made an impact at other universities, demonstrating the relevance and usefulness of the program in a campus environment.
- Explained how C-CERT would fit into the University's existing Incident Command System (ICS) structure. Georgetown also chose to include an overview of its emergency management systems and procedures, believing that C-CERT members in a supporting role should be familiar with how the University functions during an incident.

With the groundwork now laid, Georgetown and the other Consortium institutions began making the C-CERT a reality. So far, it has been a rousing success. Within two weeks of opening registration, DEMOC received over 100 applicants. Today, Georgetown has trained 38 of its own personnel and students, and 37 from the Consortium schools. They expected to train an additional 140 participants in the two final training sessions of the 2010-2011 academic year. While a difficult road at times, it was also a worthwhile one for developers and volunteers that helped make Georgetown University and its neighbors stronger and more resilient communities.



FAQ: Can I modify the CERT training materials to fit the needs of our community?

A: Yes! All CERT volunteers should receive the Basic Training course, but the materials can and should be modified to address the specific hazards and risks in your area, the types of groups that you train, and specific response procedures used by emergency services agencies in your community.

The CERT Basic Training materials use an all-hazards approach and are intended for a national audience. But communities have different hazards and risks, so you want to be hazard-specific to your area. Remember that Unit 1 of the Basic Training includes 13 separate hazard annexes. For your training, select the annexes relevant to your community.

Training should be tailored to the threats faced by the community, and should also be based on the characteristics of the audience. Many different types of groups will make up your CERTs, from neighborhood associations to faith-based groups to company employees, schools, and communities of diverse ethnicities and cultures. To be effective when disaster strikes, the training should fit the group, and not vice versa. For example, be aware of cultural differences among CERT participants and any changes to the

training that you may need to make to address cultural sensitivities.

Remember also to assure that your CERT training conforms to local emergency services protocols. For example, if your fire service responders use a particular system for marking searched buildings that differs from the procedure in the Basic Training, CERT members should use the local agency's system. Also, local government assigns emergency planning and response functions to different agencies. Be familiar with and ready to provide an overview of the disaster roles and responsibilities of each agency based on your local government's Emergency Operations Plan or Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.

Finally, though you need to cover the material in the CERT Basic Training course and should not omit any topics, you can add material to the existing units or present additional units as part of your CERT Basic Training. For example, many local CERT programs add ICS 100 to their Basic Training.

Tailoring the CERT Basic Training to your local community isn't just okay. In fact, it can help make the content more relevant, more interesting, and more accessible to your participants.

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, 2011. 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.