



## Maintaining a CERT Program - Step 1: Communicating With Volunteers

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### Overview

Now that you made the investment in your CERT program, what can you do to keep your current volunteers interested and involved? How can you determine their followup training needs, and how can you get them to help you recruit new volunteers? Many of these questions and others may be answered by communicating with the volunteers and partners. This step suggests some ways that you can communicate and some ways for you to use the information you receive.

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### Contents

This step includes the following resources:

- CERT Communication Techniques
  - Tips for Communicating With Volunteers
  - Sample Periodic Evaluation
  - Sample Newsletter
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### Web Resources

- Los Angeles CERT website  
Web Address: <http://www.cert-la.com/index.htm>
  - Hernando County, Florida CERT website  
Web Address: <http://www.co.hernando.fl.us/em/communit2.htm>
  - Writing Your Newsletter  
Web Address: <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/it/itaids/online/cbn/lesson02>
  - Tech Soup: Articles on Using Technology and Designing Websites for Nonprofits  
Web Address: [http://www.techsoup.org/articles.cfm?topicid=13&topic=Web%20Building&cg=nav&sg=content\\_topic13](http://www.techsoup.org/articles.cfm?topicid=13&topic=Web%20Building&cg=nav&sg=content_topic13)
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### How To: CERT Communication Techniques

#### The Benefits

Frequent communication:

- Helps maintain volunteer interest.
- Makes volunteers feel like they're part of the team.
- Keeps everyone abreast of what's happening in the community and with the CERT program.
- Communicating with volunteers also helps you learn what's important to your teams—what training they need, whether they feel that the program is working for them, and how they believe they can contribute to the community through their CERT efforts.

#### Using Various Communication Mechanisms

Consider a newsletter, email system, or electronic bulletin board for your program. These mechanisms are good for keeping CERT volunteers abreast of:

- Upcoming training activities.
- New CERT classes or teams being formed.
- Refresher training or special training presentations.
- CERT exercises, graduations, or awards being presented.
- Human-interest stories.
- Community safety projects or activities.
- Safety tips for the season.

#### Creating CERT Websites

If you're really ambitious, you might consider developing a website. Websites not only facilitate communication with your volunteers, but also serve to inform potential volunteers and supporters about CERT's role in the community. If you choose to develop a website, consider these tips:

- Start by creating lists of your committees, volunteers, and sponsors. With their permission, consider including their addresses, email addresses, and home and office telephone numbers.
- Purchase a website domain that everyone can remember.
- Find a local Internet provider who will donate the cost of hosting a website. Be sure to give the website designer and host plenty of credit for their contributions.
- Create an email and fax list of all media, including the names of editors and pertinent information about content and deadlines.
- Include a community response form on the site. This is a great way to generate both good ideas and volunteers!
- Add important local and national web addresses as links on your site. Be sure to include the CERT, FEMA, and NOAA websites and local or community sites.
- Include a list of CERT volunteers who can speak to interested groups on the site.



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### How To: CERT Communication Techniques (Continued)

#### Establishing Rules for Yourself

Regardless of how you communicate with your members and others, there are some rules that you should establish:

- **Be accessible.** Set aside time every day to check the message board for comments that come into the site. Respond promptly.
- **Do not provide partial information.** Wait until you have gathered all of the information you need to provide a complete response. If need be, send an email or make a phone call to explain that you are checking information and will get back with an answer.

If you commit to a response by a certain date or time, stand by your commitment.

#### Maintaining a Focus on the "Team"

Teamwork is so important to a successful CERT program that you should always focus communications on teamwork. Use your communications to:

- Share team success stories.
- Announce special projects where volunteers are needed.
- Provide recognition for team efforts.

#### Rewarding Commitment

Always remember that your success relies on volunteer commitment. Provide recognition wherever possible to those who are committed to your program. Consider awards for hours given, special projects completed, consistent support, etc., as a motivator for your team members.



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### Words of Advice: Tips for Obtaining Resources

#### **Frank Lucier - San Francisco, California** **Distinguish Between Types of Communications**

There are two types of communications:

- Day-to-day communications (newsletters, phone trees, email, mailings).
- Communications used during a disaster (HAM radios, family service radios, runners).

It is important to distinguish between the two. What works day to day will probably not work in a disaster.

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#### **Joe Lowry - Memphis, Tennessee** **Use Newsletters**

We have a reservist newsletter that we send out via the mail. The newsletter is an important tool for maintaining and building the program. If you offer drills, refresher classes, and other events of interest to program participants, a newsletter can be an economical alternative to all the individual flyers and announcements you'd otherwise send out.

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#### **Rachel Jacky - Portland, Oregon** **Use Many Methods Including Phone Trees**

We use every method that we can—newsletters and announcements that we mail out, email messages, neighborhood-association newsletter articles, and print/TV media pieces.

It's also good to use the phone trees organized by the teams. We've used their phone trees several times to activate the teams in real emergencies, and we rely on those phone trees to function well. Using the phone trees to communicate non-emergency information would be good practice for real-life emergencies.

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### Periodic Evaluation

Periodic evaluation is important, even if your program has been up and running awhile. Periodic evaluations can:

- Tell you if your volunteers are maintaining interest or if your program is getting stale.
- Provide input to help you identify additional training that would be useful.
- Identify new ways to utilize CERTs.
- Offer new recruiting ideas.

A sample periodic evaluation is shown below. You should revise the form to meet the needs of your program.

### Sample CERT Periodic Evaluation Form

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**Instructions:** Please complete all questions. Your comments are very important!

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**Neighborhood/Workplace:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. How long have you been active in the CERT program? \_\_\_\_\_ Years \_\_\_\_\_ Months

2. How would you rate your current interest level in the CERT program?

- High                       Moderate                       Low

If your current interest level is moderate or low, what types of activities would increase your interest?

3. What types of additional training do you think would be helpful for you to maintain or improve your skills?

4. When would you be most available for additional training?

- Weekday evenings                       Saturday mornings



**Sample CERT Periodic Evaluation Form**

5. Has your CERT team been deployed during your period of involvement?

- Yes                       No

***If your team has not been deployed SKIP to question 10.***

6. If your team has been deployed, please describe the nature of the deployment?

7. What was your role in the deployment?

8. How confident did you feel in your ability to perform the duties assigned to you during the deployment?

- Very confident               Somewhat confident               Not confident

If you felt less than confident about your ability to perform the duties assigned to you, what would improve your confidence level in the future?

9. How would you rate your performance on your last deployment?

- Excellent                       Good                       Poor

10. If you have other suggestions that you believe would help us to improve the CERT program, please write them in the space below.

**Thank you!**



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### Sample Newsletter

Newsletters are a popular method for communicating with CERT volunteers. The following four pages are a sample newsletter from Whatcom County, Washington.

# COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (CERT) Whatcom County, Washington

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*CERT News* is written and edited by Ann Melton with a little help from others. If you would like to submit an article for publication, please contact the Division of Emergency Management, (360) 676-6681

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## IN THIS ISSUE

### ON GOING EVENTS:

Emergency Worker- CERT Card (DEM)  
Personnel Accountability System Tags  
CERT Shirts  
Area Representatives

### PAST EVENTS:

**Red Cross Mini-Institute**  
Booth at County Employee Picnic

### FUTURE EVENTS:

Wild Edible Plant Class  
Booth at Lynden Fair  
CERT Classes: Starting September 12  
Picnic / Fire Demonstration  
LA'S National CERT Conference-  
CERT EXPO 2002

### ARTICLES:

Family Drills – An Adventure  
Websites of Interest  
All This In Fifteen Years  
Radio Column  
Notice – For your Information

### ON GOING EVENTS:

#### **EMERGENCY WORKER CARD (DEM)-A Reminder**

In order to keep your Emergency Worker Card (DEM) up to date, there is a requirement to participate in at least one CERT activity during each calendar year. (See the March 2002 newsletter for more information). As some of you might have limited time, or other obligations that prevent your active participation with the group, here are some alternatives: Write a short newsletter article; send in a notice of other community or school projects you have helped with that relate to emergency preparedness; or suggest a Continuing Education class you would like to attend and assist in its organization.

If there is no contact with CERT it is assumed that you are not available at this time. [Point of Contact Information], Area Representative Coordinator, may contact you in the near future. She will be calling each person with survey questions to find out basic information and desired involvement level. Special plans are in progress for a very active CERT group and your participation is invited and welcomed.

### PERSONNEL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM (PAS)

#### TAGS--A follow up

Emergency Management is in the process of procuring the materials necessary to make PAS tags. We will need a couple of volunteers to take the task of making the tags. Please call DEM (676-6681) if this interests you.

#### CERT SHIRTS--To be continued

Several more shirt orders are needed before a reasonable discount for quantity can be achieved. The offer will be presented again in October and tentative prices given for the number which are requested.

### PAST EVENTS:

#### RED CROSS MINI-INSTITUTE

By Jeannine Chapman

CERT members were invited by Whatcom County Chapter of the American Red Cross (ARC) to attend the Mini-Institute classes in July. Notification of additional classes sponsored by ARC will be published as we are notified.

“Introduction to Disaster Services,” an overview of disasters, described community response and the role of the ARC Disaster Services. A review of the immediate and long-term effects of disasters to victims and to the community was discussed. It was noted that disasters often bring people together and create a sense of patriotism; neighbors helping neighbors.

An overview of the “Management and Administration of ARC” was described as direct services to the victims including Disaster Health, Family Service and Mass Care (care of large numbers of victims). There are also Internal Support Services such as Accounting, Communications, Computer operations, Logistics, Records and Reports, and Staffing and Training. External Support Services can be described as Fund Raising and Public Affairs.

Sunday's classes focused on the activities of DHS (Disaster Health Services). Many that attended were registered nurses (RN's) who wanted to volunteer, and were interested in being sent to national disasters as well as local areas. We learned that shelters must have a nurse on duty 24-hours a day and that people with serious medical problems are usually taken to hospitals or motels. Several of those attending were also interested in the CERT program.



ARC instructors emphasized that volunteers need training, experience, commitment and dedication. They welcome any CERT members who want to attend their classes and get additional training. In a disaster, CERT members will be an asset to the response by the Red Cross and other agencies.

### **BOOTH AT WHATCOM COUNTY EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION PICNIC**

Chris Camp staffed the CERT informational booth at the annual employee picnic at Hovander Park on July 25. Posters made of pictures of past CERT classes and their many activities were displayed as well as information posters about Emergency Management. Brochures and handouts detailing emergency preparedness were offered. Chris was available to answer any questions about the CERT program and the upcoming September classes.

### **FUTURE EVENTS:**

#### **WILD EDIBLE PLANTS CLASS – August 2**

**By Ann Melton**

A full house is expected for Ann's wild party. The guests will wander about Ann's "out back" with wanted posters and pictures searching for the elusive provender hiding in the woods. A "non" gourmet taste fest will include rose hip jam, salal jelly, cranberry catsup, cattail corn on the cob, tempura fried day lily blossoms, and pan-fried roots. If the weather (and time) is cooperative, a short trip to Lake Padden for other wild food will be included. If there is additional interest another class will be offered in the winter. The class will begin at 6:00 p.m. for those that have pre-registered.

#### **ANNUAL NATIONAL NIGHT OUT – August 6**

A CERT booth will be set up at the Haggen's Meridian store parking lot to offer disaster preparedness information and tell about the CERT program from 2:00 until 8:00 PM. Cari Thomson will lead the staff at the booth this year but she needs additional volunteers. This event will be part of National Night Out, a national movement to regain neighborhoods and get acquainted with those that share the space around your homes. This will be Bellingham's sixth year participating, and CERT's second.

#### **TRAIN THE TRAINER CLASSES OFFERED IN SNOHOMISH COUNTY AUGUST 12-15**

Snohomish County Department of Emergency Management is offering a CERT Train-the-Trainer class on August 12-15 in Everett. The class size is limited to 30. If you are interested, please contact [Point of Contact Information].

#### **BOOTH AT THE NORTHWEST WASHINGTON FAIR IN LYNDEN AUGUST 12-18**

CERT members have covered all the shifts for the CERT Booth at Fair. Thank you volunteers.

#### **CERT CLASSES: CLASSES START**

**SEPTEMBER 12**

Community Emergency Response Team training will be offered during several classes over the fall and winter months. Strong interest has been expressed from neighborhood groups, church groups, county employees, and individuals wanting to better prepare themselves. Two simultaneous classes will begin on September 12: a class for county employees during the day and another in the evening.

#### **PICNIC / FIRE DEMONSTRATION / LUMMI ISLAND**

**IN SEPTEMBER-TBD**

The **details** of the Lummi Island Volunteer Fire Department demonstration and the picnic at Bob Busch's home **will be sent by email** or phone message to everyone prior to the event. As the ferry to Lummi Island will be out of service for two weeks in September, the picnic will *probably* be the third Thursday of September. Complete information will be sent to each CERT member as soon as it is available.

#### **CERT EXPO 2002 October 5, 2002**

**Snohomish County, WA**

All Washington State FEMA CERT graduates are invited to attend a CERT exposition and training session at the Evergreen Fairgrounds, Monroe. The City of Monroe, Snohomish County Dept. of Emergency Management and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers sponsor this EXPO. Training will include:

**Advanced Search and Rescue  
Cribbing  
Survival Disaster Preparedness  
Advanced Triage**

**Incident Command  
Large power Tools  
Advanced Fire Suppression  
Traffic Control**

**Communications  
and More!**

The training will culminate with an exercise to utilize CERT skills. Registration by Sept 13<sup>th</sup> is \$20.00. After Sept 13<sup>th</sup> it is \$25.00. An event T-shirt will be provided with each registration. For additional information, log on to [www.snodem.org](http://www.snodem.org) and look under the CERT tab.

**Would you like to get a Whatcom County team together to attend?** [Point of Contact Information]

### **LA'S NATIONAL CERT CONFERENCE PARTNERS IN PREPAREDNESS "OUR HISTORY IS OUR FUTURE"**

Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) will be hosting a two-day National CERT Conference in early November 2002. Many representatives from CERT programs from around the nation are expected to participate and share thoughts, ideas and experiences to help build a unified CERT Program.

It all started in Los Angeles in response to earthquake preparedness and civilian response to overwhelming disasters, and has grown into a nationwide program, which was recently recognized by President Bush. Bush has requested that CERT membership increase by 400,000 during the next two years.

Captain Don Lee, LAFD CERT Coordinator has secured a hotel close to the airport that will serve as the conference center and will house all guests wishing to stay overnight. So mark your calendar, E-mail to [cert-la@usa.net](mailto:cert-la@usa.net) to reserve your spots. Watch for more information coming soon.

### **ARTICLES:**

#### **FAMILY DRILLS – AN ADVENTURE**

**By Ann Melton**

Are you ready for a disaster like those presented during the recent fires and floods in other areas of the United States? Planning is important but a rehearsal will identify any flaws in your plans. Several CERT groups have tried out these suggestions.

- Surprise your family with an unannounced trip over a weekend. Give your family 20 minutes to pack ... then leave ... ready or not. Drive 100 miles and stay in a motel ... or tent. Do you have enough gas to go that far without stopping for a fill-up? At you destination, make a list of everything you forgot to bring. Discuss how you would feel if your home was destroyed – did you bring important papers, irreplaceable family heirlooms, your pet?
- Try a weekend without electricity by shutting off the breaker. Cook your food over a fire in the yard or eat cold foods. Of course, there is no TV but you do have a battery-powered radio. No "time out" at the movie or fast food restaurant, please. Don't open the refrigerator door.
- Go on a drive one afternoon and surprise everyone with a stop at a remote area and spend the night there ... with only the items in your car! By morning, you will know exactly what supplies you need to have in your car emergency kit.
- Will your survival foods last a whole weekend? This is a good drill to conduct when it is time to rotate your emergency food and supplies. Or hold a picnic with other CERT members and see if your survival foods are palatable. Try to live a whole week using only foods in your pantry and your stored water supply. Don't open the refrigerator, ... however, wild food collection is acceptable.
- Try a fire drill at 2 am. No electric lights are allowed.

These "adventures" might seem a little extreme, but each drill will identify missing supplies or useless items or deficient plans. You might want to revise your disaster kit, emergency foods, your storage methods, or your survival plans.

**The most prepared are the most dedicated.**

**~ Raymond Berry ~**

#### **WEB SITES OF INTEREST**

**by Ann Melton**

Center for Disease Control – Health Topics A to Z <http://www.cdc.gov/health/>

This is a slice of Bellingham – can you recognize the location? Great aerial view and map. Expand it to your neighborhood. Images are courtesy of the US Geological Survey.

<http://teraserver.homeadvisor.msn.com/image.asp?S=10&T=1&X=2694&Y=26982&Z=10&W=2>  
<http://teraserver.homeadvisor.msn.com/image.asp?S=14&T=2&X=168&Y=1686&Z=10&W=2>

**ALL THIS IN FIFTEEN YEARS:****by Ann Melton and Jeannine Chapman**

**Brittany (Britt) Chapman, at age 15, became a CERT member, and is the youngest member of the Whatcom County CERT group. Since becoming a member last June, Britt has acted in her CERT capacity at the Airport Disaster Drill as well as at the AirFest. She is certified by the Red Cross in First Aid, CPR & AED. She enjoyed the continuing education moulage class and expects to have a kit put together before Halloween to try on her friends and future CERT training "victims."**

What most people don't know is that Britt deals daily with a chronic illness -- Ulcerative Colitis. She has been sick since she was 9 years old and has been in and out of hospitals going through painful surgeries including a temporary colostomy. She is often called on by Seattle Children's Hospital to help other parents and teenagers deal with the illness and surgeries of Ulcerative Colitis, an embarrassing and serious illness for children.

Britt is currently writing a brochure about her experiences with Ulcerative Colitis and her surgeries and procedures for the Seattle doctors and Surgeons in the IBD unit to provide to parents and teens. Britt has been a member and spokesperson for the Whatcom County/Skagit "Crohns and Colitis" Support Group and continues to help anyone that calls her.

Nothing holds her back from being a normal, social, and active teenager who loves dancing, singing, arts/crafts and sports. Britt will be a Junior at Sehome High School in the fall. She is also active with her church youth group where she participates in wilderness camping, being a camp youth leader, more instruction in first aid service, and learning service to others. This month she attended "Pioneer Trek", dressing like a pioneer (yes in a skirt and bonnet) and using a handcart to experience the teamwork and hardships of the early pioneers. Killing a live chicken, cooking and eating it was one of the highlights of that trip.

In her spare time Britt helps a family who has several young children. One child is severely handicapped (mute, retarded, and partially blind) and she has learned to communicate with him by sign language.

This summer you can find Britt working at her new job position with the Red Cross as the Outreach Program Assistant. Brittany has learned to enjoy life to it's fullest, and serving and helping others shows her love to all. Brittany Chapman will be sixteen on August 25. Happy Birthday, Britt. You are an inspiration to everyone and magnanimous representative for CERT.

**RADIO COLUMN****Introduction to Amateur Radio****By Jon Landers**

Amateur Radio enthusiasts come from all ages, walks of life, and interests. Some are attracted by the ability to communicate across the country, around the globe, even with astronauts on space missions. Others build and experiment with electronics. (Most drive their families' nuts with wires, antennas, and boxes that make strange noises).

Although the main purpose of Amateur Radio is fun, it is called the "Amateur Radio Service" because it also has a serious face. The FCC created this "Service" and began licensing radio operators in 1912 to fill the need for a pool of experts who could provide backup emergency communications. In addition, the FCC acknowledged the ability of the hobby to advance the communication and technical skills of radio, and to enhance international goodwill.

There have been some recent changes that make getting your first license much easier. Morse code proficiency is no longer required for the first test. Should you choose to attain more advanced licenses, the code is required, but not at the higher speed requirements of the past. For further information:

<http://www.arrl.org>

The American Radio Relay League, 225 Main Street, Newington, CT 06111

Telephone: 1-800-32 NEW-HAM

**NOTICE REGARDING THE SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER**

[Point of Contact Information] will edit the September Newsletter. [Point of Contact Information] will be in Alaska until September 2. Please send any articles to [Point of Contact Information]. The newsletter for September will be completed by August 28. Articles will be in great demand and are requested from CERT members.