



Starting a CERT Program - Step 6: Establishing a Training Cadre

Overview

The initial success of your program will depend on the quality of the basic classroom instruction. To ensure that your program is successful, you will need to establish a cadre of qualified trainers. The number of trainers will depend on the size of your program and the frequency of your training. Regardless of the size of your cadre, all instructors must be qualified. This step will help you identify instructors and establish standards so that all instructors present—and represent—your program well.

Contents

This step includes the following resources:

- Selecting Instructors
 - Establishing Instructor Standards
 - Preparing Instructors
 - Tips for Establishing a Training Cadre
 - Sample Instructor Background Questionnaire
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Web Resources

- Training Presentation Fundamentals
Web Address: http://www.presentersonline.com/training/train_delivery.html
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How To: Selecting Instructors

Importance of Selecting Qualified Instructors

Students regularly rate the quality of instruction as more important to meeting their overall learning goals than any other factor. Students pay attention to the instructors more than to print materials or media.

The quality of the instructors you select will have more to do with the initial success or failure of your program than anything else. So, you will need to select your instructor cadre carefully and train them so that they are able to present the course in a way that relates to the students.

Most agencies that sponsor CERTs use internal resources to teach at the start of the program. However, a challenge faced by many CERT Program Coordinators is whether to enlist those who are interested (such as CERT graduates) to augment or replace subject-matter experts (such as professional firefighters or EMTs) as instructors. There are advantages and challenges associated with each. These advantages and challenges are shown in the table below.

Regardless of the decision you make about the types of instructors to recruit and train, all should:

- Be interested and enthusiastic about the CERT concept.
- Be able to make the training hands-on and fun.
- Enjoy working with people.
- Teach to the training and program objectives.
- Know how their session fits into the other sessions and the program.

Factors To Consider

Review the following lists of advantages and challenges to help you make decisions about the types of instructors to select.

First Responders as CERT Trainers	
Advantages	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have first-response experience ▪ May have training experience ▪ Makes quality control easier ▪ Are reliable ▪ Work set schedules ▪ Have credibility ▪ Develop a relationship between the participants and the department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May be uncertain about CERTs ▪ May not have training experience ▪ Cost more than CERT volunteers ▪ Tell "war" stories ▪ May go into too much detail for training objective



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How To: Selecting Instructors (Continued)

CERT Graduates as Trainers	
Advantages	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are familiar with CERT operations ▪ May have training experience ▪ Must fit CERT around work responsibilities ▪ Cost less than professional responders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May not have the level of expertise that first-responders do ▪ May cause issues with professional responders who feel that CERT graduates are taking their jobs ▪ Cannot answer what-if questions



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How To: Establishing Instructor Standards

After selecting the instructors for your program, you will need to ensure that all instructors fully understand the materials and are equally qualified to present the training. Some ideas for establishing instructor standards are included below.

- **Review your cadre's professional background.** Most professional firefighters have been trained in emergency medical procedures and team organization and have at least some familiarity with disaster psychology. Others may have search and rescue experience. Civilian trainers may have even greater gaps in their knowledge of emergency operations. Review the professional background for each of your instructors and identify gaps in their background that must be filled prior to presenting the training.
- **Review your cadre's training background.** Virtually everyone has received some type of training, but not everyone can present training in a way that is engaging for the audience. Even trainers who have a lot of experience may not be able to train every topic with the same degree of thoroughness. Ask each potential instructor to provide his or her training background, and review the information carefully so that you can identify where you may need to build in some training "skills" sessions for instructors.
- **Develop an instructor "deployment" strategy.** Decide if you want all instructors to be able to train all CERT topics or if you want them to specialize. There are advantages and challenges associated with either strategy.
 - If you have the luxury of being able to select your instructors from among a group of experts in each CERT area, you may be able to focus your efforts on presentation skills only.
 - Requiring all instructors to be able to train the entire program will be more difficult for you but may benefit the program if an instructor becomes suddenly ill. Also, having instructors cross-trained in different modules will give you more flexibility in scheduling.
- **Develop a train-the-trainer strategy.** This strategy should be based on the instructors' backgrounds and your instructor deployment strategy. Some CERT Program Coordinators follow a train-the-trainer strategy of requiring observation, then gradually integrating the new instructor into the training. Others have developed a more formal train-the-trainer program that provides skills updates and training on presentation skills and techniques.
- **Implement your strategy.** Do a trial run of your program with the instructors conducting the training to each other and to you. Get feedback from all involved about how well they think the program worked and what could be improved for the future. Incorporate the feedback session into your overall train-the-trainer program.



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How To: Preparing Instructors

Even if the instructors you select are experienced, you should meet with them as a team to help them see the big picture and their role in it. If you are an experienced instructor or Program Coordinator, you may have other techniques that you use to train instructors. Don't feel constrained by these suggestions. You know your program and instructors better than anyone!

Training the Trainers

Experienced CERT Program Coordinators have been successful in training their instructors using the steps listed below.

- **Step 1:** Provide an orientation to the CERT program and to the training.
- **Step 2:** Allow new instructors time to review the materials carefully.
- **Step 3:** If just starting, do a dry run of the training.
- **Step 4:** Require new instructors to observe the training.
- **Step 5:** Schedule a practice session for new instructors to present the session that they will train to the Program Coordinator and other instructors.
- **Step 6:** Require new instructors to co-train with an experienced instructor.

Feedback at every point in this process is critical to developing good instructors. Be sure that all instructors are aware of your expectations for them and for the training. Provide constructive critique of training skills, and incorporate lessons learned into future classes.

Monitoring Training

The program manager should monitor training to guard against:

- Instructors covering material in far greater depth than the Instructor Guide.
- Telling too many "war" stories.
- Skipping hands-on training.

By using this structured approach, you will ensure that your instructors are:

- Familiar with all of the sessions.
- Have agreement on standards and protocols being taught.
- Use basic instructional skills, including how to engage the group, questioning techniques, and how to make the training interesting.



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Words of Advice: Establishing a Training Cadre

Dale Kleos - Whatcom County, Washington **Develop a Training Plan**

Having a plan for training your CERT trainers is important. Some of our volunteers are sent to EMI and we also have an in-house train-the-trainer program.

Rachel Jacky - Portland, Oregon **Use Local Resources**

We offer train-the-trainer directly through the Portland fire department.

Joe Lowry - Memphis, Tennessee **Form Partnerships**

One way to build a cadre is through establishing partnerships. We partner with our local fire department because they are experts on much of the emergency information.



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Sample Instructor Background Questionnaire

You may want to use a questionnaire to gather information about potential instructors. A sample questionnaire is shown on the next page.



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Sample Instructor Background Questionnaire

CERT INSTRUCTOR BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE			
Name:			
Address:	Work Phone:		
	Home Phone:		
	Fax:		
Employer:	Email Address: (if available)		
<p>PLACE A CHECK NEXT TO ALL AREAS THAT YOU HAVE PAST EXPERIENCE.</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <input type="checkbox"/> CERT Program <input type="checkbox"/> Fire safety and fire suppression <input type="checkbox"/> Hazardous materials safety <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency medical triage & treatment <input type="checkbox"/> Search & rescue techniques and markings </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Incident Command System (ICS) operations <input type="checkbox"/> Disaster psychology <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise controller <input type="checkbox"/> Other: (List) </td> </tr> </table>		<input type="checkbox"/> CERT Program <input type="checkbox"/> Fire safety and fire suppression <input type="checkbox"/> Hazardous materials safety <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency medical triage & treatment <input type="checkbox"/> Search & rescue techniques and markings	<input type="checkbox"/> Incident Command System (ICS) operations <input type="checkbox"/> Disaster psychology <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise controller <input type="checkbox"/> Other: (List)
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<p>Please list your past training presentation experience.</p> 			
<p>Place a check next to all areas that you wish to be considered for.</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Lead Instructor <input type="checkbox"/> Co-Instructor for: <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Preparedness <input type="checkbox"/> Fire Safety/Hazardous Materials <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Medical Operations </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise Safety Officer <input type="checkbox"/> Light Search and Rescue <input type="checkbox"/> Disaster Psychology </td> </tr> </table>		<input type="checkbox"/> Lead Instructor <input type="checkbox"/> Co-Instructor for: <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Preparedness <input type="checkbox"/> Fire Safety/Hazardous Materials <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Medical Operations	<input type="checkbox"/> Exercise Safety Officer <input type="checkbox"/> Light Search and Rescue <input type="checkbox"/> Disaster Psychology
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Your Signature:	Date:		