



Maintaining a CERT Program - Step 3: Planning Continuing Training

Overview

Continuing training, exercises, and projects will be important for several reasons. It will help CERTs to maintain and improve their skills, it will keep volunteer involvement and interest high, and it will benefit the entire program and community. This step provides some possible topics and approaches to providing continuing training to CERT volunteers.

Contents

This step includes the following resources:

- Planning and Conducting Refresher Training
 - Tips for Planning Continuing Training
 - Sample Periodic Evaluation Form
-

Web Resources

- CERT Website
Web Address: <http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/cert>
 - Los Angeles CERT Website
Web Address: <http://www.cert-la.com>
 - Emergency Management Institute: Independent Study Courses
Web Address: <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/crslist.htm>
-



Maintaining a CERT Program - Step 3: Planning Continuing Training

How To: Planning and Conducting Refresher Training

Unless your CERTs exercise or are activated regularly, refresher training will be a necessity to keep skills sharp and interest high—it is the "use it or lose it" principle. If your community has experienced a major emergency or disaster recently, you may want to review your needs assessment and look for gaps in services.

Benefits of Continued Training

Be creative about training opportunities for CERT members. Training provides, not only skill improvement and maintenance, it provides an opportunity for you to interact more directly with the volunteers and it helps to maintain volunteer interest and involvement. Remember, you are building a local resource to help you and others.

Offering Advanced Training

You may also wish to present training to enhance CERT members' skills beyond the basic level. For example, some CERT program coordinators have offered training in:

- The Incident Command System (ICS)
- Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)
- Automatic external defibrillator (AED)
- Advanced first-aid techniques
- Donations management
- Community relations
- Damage assessment
- Traffic control
- Animal control

Soliciting Suggestions

Your CERT volunteers may have suggestions for refresher or skill-enhancement training so be sure to invite their input. A good way to gain volunteer input is through interest surveys or focus groups, which can be combined with a periodic program evaluation.

Tapping External Resources

Some skill-enhancement training is available through outside organizations. Some sources that you can check for refresher or skill-enhancement training are listed below.

- The American Red Cross offers training in first aid, CPR, and AED. The Red Cross also has a variety of materials that may be of interest to CERT members.
- State emergency management agencies offer a variety of training programs and may be able to provide exercise design assistance.
- Local public and private agencies may have training that, if modified, would be useful for CERT volunteers (utility companies, Humane Society, ARES/RACES, police departments, National Weather Service, mental health departments, and more).

FEMA will help by placing CERT self-study materials and refresher quizzes on its website. Be sure to check the CERT site often for updated materials.



Maintaining a CERT Program - Step 3: Planning Continuing Training

Words of Advice: Tips for Planning Continuing Training

Dale Kleos - Whatcom County, Washington **Benefits of Continuing Education**

The most beneficial thing we do is continuing education—after the class is over we don't let it drop. More than half of our continuing education deals with embellishing what we taught in the course; the other half deals with other emergency or disaster-related subjects that weren't addressed in the CERT program but are of interest.

Stew Anderson - Natrona County, Wyoming **Continuing Training Is Vital**

Continuing training is vital to the program. We offer CPR, terrorism awareness, wildland firefighting assistance, and advanced firefighting. In addition, our volunteers participate in disaster exercises with our local fire department.

Frank Lucier - San Francisco, California **Ask Volunteers About Their Training Needs**

CERT volunteers know what skills they are comfortable with and the ones that they are not. If you have painted a realistic disaster picture for them during the training, they know what type of additional training will make them more effective in a disaster. Ask them what they need. One size doesn't fit all. A team of senior citizens needs different types of continuing training than does a student team at the local high school.

Joe Lowry - Memphis, Tennessee **Keeping Volunteers Updated**

CERT volunteers must keep up to date on the changes in the community. We keep volunteers up to date by:

- Including informational pieces in the newsletter.
- Scheduling monthly meetings for graduates and interested individuals to attend.
- Conducting refresher training.
- Re-certifying everyone.

Our local government and businesses sponsor community exercises in cooperation with local emergency services agencies so the teams can participate in annual exercises.

We post a calendar of monthly training and exercises on our website. We encourage all citizens to take part in emergency training exercises.



Maintaining a CERT Program - Step 3: Planning Continuing Training

Words of Advice: Tips for Planning Continuing Training (Continuing)

Jennifer Teeler - City of Federal Way, Washington Keeping the CERT Graduate Involved

One of the challenges in any CERT program is keeping volunteers engaged and involved after they have completed the CERT course. The City of Federal Way, Washington has used a number of techniques to do this including using CERT graduates as volunteers for projects such as installing smoke detectors in area homes, publishing a CERT newsletter, and having CERT members staff a booth at our community fair.

One of the most successful ways we have kept volunteers involved in the program is by offering continuing education classes for CERT graduates. These classes can also contribute valuable skills and information to the graduate's toolbox of knowledge gained through the CERT course.

Olga Arroyo - Orlando, Florida Offer Ongoing Training for CERT Graduates

Since the program began in 1994, we have trained over 650 CERT members. Each of these members is active and willing to be ready if a disaster hits the City of Orlando. In January 2002, our first class of First Responder was initiated and it was a success with a total of 25 participants. Six of the participants have successfully passed the exam for First Responder on July 2002 by the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians. Each year we plan to have this class as an ongoing training for our CERT graduates.



Maintaining a CERT Program - Step 3: Planning Continuing Training

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

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

Neighborhood/Workplace: _____

11. How long have you been active in the CERT program? _____ Years _____ Months

12. 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?

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

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

- Weekday evenings Saturday mornings



Sample CERT Periodic Evaluation Form

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

- Yes No

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

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

17. What was your role in the deployment?

18. 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?

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

- Excellent Good Poor

20. 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!