

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

In a Nutshell

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) is a program that trains people and organizations to assist their families and emergency services in the event of an emergency and/or natural disaster before professional first responders can arrive. CERT members are often the first responders to major disaster situations, especially when medical and emergency staff cannot immediately come to the rescue.

The “How To”

CERTs respond to emergency situations effectively and efficiently, without placing themselves in unnecessary danger. Basic CERT training may include how to treat life-threatening medical injuries and provide medical aid, managing utilities and putting out small fires, searching for and rescuing victims safely, assisting people with special and functional needs, preparing for acts of terrorism, and collecting disaster intelligence to support first responder efforts.

Check [here](#) to find a CERT program in your community. Existing teams in your community may serve as informative resources if you decide your group is interested in assembling a team. CERT requires a partnership between community members, a school, a nonprofit, an employer or local government, and emergency management and response organizations. Materials may include hardhats, vests, gloves, goggles, medical kits, and bags to carry the equipment. As fire safety is a common goal of CERT classes, see if a local Fire Department can provide you with support. CERT Booklets are available [online](#), along with other CERT materials.

Organizing

CERT programs usually operate through a local emergency response organization such as the local Fire Department, Office of Emergency Management, or Department of Public Safety and should be endorsed by the local Citizens Corps Council if your community has one.

Please note that CERT members are covered under the Volunteer Protection Act. Generally the Volunteer Protection Act eliminates volunteer liability if damages are caused while acting under the organization's duties or responsibilities given to that individual.

Costs

CERT members are volunteers. Out-of-pocket costs will disincentivize participation. If your CERT is connected with an organization, a city, or employment center, ask them to sponsor the team. Communities that are committed to emergency preparedness and response may be able to support a portion of the costs. For possible funding opportunities, visit the [Missouri Citizens Corps](#) or the [Illinois Citizen Corps Grants](#) may also be available to support communitywide approaches to creating safe schools.

Teen CERT

Teen CERT is for youth who would like to learn readiness and response skills. Teen CERT instructors should include nurses, teachers, and physical education teachers as well as police officers and fire fighters. Watch the [Teen CERT PSA](#) or learn more about Teen CERT [here](#).