

CERT – Community Emergency Response Team

Portland CERT started in October of 2006

Point of Contact: Emergency Management Director – David Blais

CERT educates individuals about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. Using training learned in the classroom and during exercises, CERT volunteers can assist others in their community following a disaster when professional responders are not immediately available to help. CERT volunteers are also encouraged to support emergency response agencies by taking an active role in emergency preparedness projects.

(As found on FEMA.org)

Following a major disaster, first responders who provide fire and medical services will not be able to meet the demand for these services. Factors such as number of victims, communication failures and road blockages will prevent people from accessing emergency services they have come to expect at a moment's notice through 911. People will have to rely on each other for help in order to meet their immediate life saving and life sustaining needs.

One also expects that under these kinds of conditions, family members, fellow employees and neighbors will spontaneously try to help each other. This was the case following the Mexico City earthquake where untrained, spontaneous volunteers saved 800 people. However, 100 people lost their lives while attempting to save others. This is a high price to pay and is preventable through training.

If we can predict that emergency services will not meet immediate needs following a major disaster, especially if there is no warning as in an earthquake and people will spontaneously volunteer, what can government do to prepare citizens for this eventuality?

- First, present citizens the facts about what to expect following a major disaster in terms of immediate services.
- Second, give the message about their responsibility for mitigation and preparedness.
- Third, train them in needed life saving skills with emphasis on decision making skills, rescuer safety and doing the greatest good for the greatest number.

- Fourth, organize teams so that they are an extension of first responder services offering immediate help to victims until professional services arrive.

CERT is about readiness, people helping people, rescuer safety and doing the greatest good for the greatest number. CERT is a positive and realistic approach to emergency and disaster situations where citizens will be initially on their own and their actions can make a difference. Through training, citizens can manage utilities and put out small fires; treat the three killers by ①opening airways, ②controlling bleeding, and ③treating for shock; provide basic medical aid; search for and rescue victims safely and organize themselves and spontaneous volunteers to be effective.

Portland CERT in Action

Emergencies

Number of times the CERTs have responded in actual emergencies: 1

Types of emergencies/disasters to which the CERTs have responded:

- Other - Kleen Energy Power Plant Explosion

Activities During Emergencies

Activities conducted by CERTs during past emergencies:

- Traffic management / Crowd management
- Staffing Emergency Operating Center
- Community relations / Distribution of emergency information to public

Non-Emergency Functions

Non-emergency functions performed by CERT members:

- Conducting or supporting threat/hazard assessments
- Conduct and support emergency preparedness efforts and projects, including sharing information with the public about protective actions and encouraging them to practice
- Support emergency planning, exercises, and drills in the community, including for neighborhoods, schools, and businesses
- Support for public safety at community events
- Fire safety