

CERT Association of Illinois

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INFORMATIONAL BULLETIN

Step by Step to Starting and Maintaining a CERT Team

By: Trish Billings, Milton Township CERT & Michelle Hanneken, Serve Illinois

Forming a local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) requires planning, commitments, organizational skills, leadership and “buy-in” of community leaders. The following is a summary of steps to take helping to ensure a successful program. This document is a living document so feel free to edit to your needs. We recommend that you do not hesitate to contact your state liaison, state association and other CERT teams for ideas and assistance.

1. Registration of CERT TEAM

- a. In Illinois, historically a local unit of government is a sponsor of a CERT program. Jurisdictions at the city, village, township, county, and regional level generally choose a specific department that the management and implementation of CERT resides. In many cases, it is within emergency management but there are many who choose to use the police department, fire department, mayor’s office, health department, etc. There is no wrong way of doing business in this regard-only what works best for that jurisdiction.
- b. The federal agency tasked with CERT oversight is the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Additional program information as well as to register a new program is here:
<https://community.fema.gov/PreparednessCommunity/s/welcome-to-cert>
- c. We also recommend you notify the State CERT Liaison as the FEMA registration goes to the state for approval first. The liaison will notify the State Association and any other necessary organizations.
 - i. Michelle Hanneken, Serve Illinois
michelle.j.hanneken@illinois.gov
217.524.2251

2. Funding

- a. Where will you get your monies to fund your program?
- b. Will you fundraise?
- c. Are there monies in your budget for your team?
- d. Do you wish to setup your organization as a 5013c not-for-profit?

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3. Facility

- a. Do you have a place big enough for your training?
- b. Does the facility have insurance coverage for you, or do you need insurance?

4. Instructors

- a. Do you have people who are trained to instruct the CERT Class? Additional information regarding the State CERT Train-the-Trainer course is here: <http://public.iema.state.il.us/iema/training/Course.asp?CourseID=3140>
- b. Use professionals as much as possible such as firefighters, fire chiefs, doctors, nurses, psychologist, law enforcement officers, and CERT members who successfully completed the Train-the-Trainer (TtT) program.

5. Students - this is the public who want to volunteer.

- a. Where are you going to get them from? Try these like-minded groups:
 - i. Citizen Police Academy.
 - ii. EMA/ESDA groups.
 - iii. Business expos.
 - iv. Website/Facebook page.
 - v. PR events.
 - vi. Open Houses.
 - vii. HOA (Homeowners Assoc.) & Condo board meetings.
 - viii. Park District building.
 - ix. Public meetings.
 - x. Word of mouth.

6. Volunteers (to help run the class)

- a. Graduates of the regular CERT class, CERT staff, members of the IL Cert Association, neighboring CERT team staff, etc.
- b. They can assist with the following:
 - i. Drive/run vehicle/equipment.
 - ii. Teach a unit (if trained through t-t-t) & teach make-up classes (if you allow them).
 - iii. Sign-in/out table.
 - iv. Food table.
 - v. Computer setup/screen/mic/speakers

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- vi. Take pictures of the classes for Student ID's and PR purposes.
 - vii. Distribute CERT Bags, check lists, and sign agreement (if the bags are to be returned upon leaving CERT service).
 - viii. Assist with the fire practice stations.
 - ix. Assist with medical, cribbing & SAR practicals.
 - x. Victims/Survivors for the Final Exercise.
 - xi. Moulage artists, observers.
 - xii. General set up & take down.
 - xiii. Etc.
7. **Materials** - FEMA's Ready website www.ready.gov has free resources. Listed below are suggested resources for materials. The decisions regarding the use of materials besides the training curriculum are up to each individual team.
- a. Printed Resources: <https://orders.gpo.gov/icpd/ICPD.aspx>
 - b. Manuals
 - i. Participant (student) Manual:
https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/2019.CERT_.Basic_.PM_FINAL_508c.pdf
 - ii. Participant (student) Manual Hazard Annex:
https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/2019.CERT_.HazardAnnexes.PM_.FINAL_.508c.pdf
 - iii. Instructor Manual:
https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/2019.CERT_.Basic_.IG_.FINAL_.508c.pdf
 - iv. Instructor Manual Hazard Annex:
https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/2019.CERT_.HazardAnnexes.PM_.FINAL_.508c.pdf
 - c. CERT Folders: One-page brochures on natural and man-made disasters. Be sure to browse all of them.
 - d. CERT Supplies: A simple web search will also direct you to vendors that provide products such as backpacks, ballcaps and other things you may wish to have in a go-bag. The CERT Association of Illinois does not endorse vendors.

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- e. Radios: Radios come in a myriad of formats and frequencies. CERTs usually utilize FRS two-way radios because they are easy to get, are not costly and easy to use. A simple web search will result in many choices. Make sure your sponsoring agency approves of such equipment use.
8. **Materials for Each Training Session** – Training material and supplies can become costly and if you are on a tight budget requires instructors to be innovative. In addition, COVID and other diseases requires instructors to come up with alternative teaching/learning methodologies. Some our suggestions are:
- a. Build your training kits over time to spread out costs.
 - b. Get ideas and assistance from other CERT teams and your Association.
 - c. Utilize substitute items to compensate for limitations. An example in teaching transportation of patients with an elderly student is to use store manikins instead of fire dummies. Store manikins are cheap and lightweight compared to the recommended fire dummy.
 - d. Utilize your fire, police, public works, local union members to build your supplies. (i.e., sheet metal workers building your fire pans).
 - e. Share training kits on a regional or neighborly basis.
9. **Keeping your Team Active** – hopefully emergencies are few in your community. The problem is if your team is only activated for emergencies, you might find interest waning. The following suggestions can assist in retaining interest:
- a. Have monthly & annual drills to review what they learned originally.
 - b. Conduct local safety event(s).
 - c. Arrange volunteer opportunities at local events, parades, open houses, etc.
 - d. Steer them toward tabletop exercises, seminars, online courses, etc.
 - e. Inform them of other volunteer opportunities with EMA, SAR, MRC, Red Cross, etc.
 - f. Coordinate cross training with other CERT groups.
 - g. If a budget allows – uniforms, gear, awards, etc.
 - h. Ask if they want to help with the CERT Challenge.
 - i. Work with local Police, fire, 9-1-1, local government to give or assist with public tours.

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In Summary - *The CERT program provides valuable resources to our first responders and public safety organizations. More importantly, CERTs help to educate citizens about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact your community, and train them in basic disaster response skills thus making your citizens a resource. We encourage this growth throughout the State.*

Resources:

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