



LATAH COUNTY DISASTER SERVICES

C.E.R.T

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

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ACRONOYMS

CERT – Community Emergency Response Team

EMI – Emergency Management Institute

FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency

EMS – Emergency Medical Services

IC – Incident Command

ICS – Incident Command System

NIMS – National Incident Management System

SOP – Standard Operating Procedures

Policy

Latah County Disaster Services recognizes that:

-- In the event of a major all-hazard emergency or disaster within the County or surrounding areas, there is likelihood that most emergency management and public safety resources, such as fire and rescue, emergency medical services, and law enforcement agencies will be overwhelmed.

-- Assistance from neighboring counties is probable; however, response time is unknown.

--Citizens within Latah County may need immediate response.

--The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program offers a resource of citizens, trained by local emergency management and public safety professionals, can provide an immediate and deliberate response that may have the capability to save lives and property.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide procedural policy and guidance with respect to the CERT program as a resource in disaster response.

Procedures

These procedures apply to CERT operations and administration under the auspices of Latah County Disaster Services for emergency or non-emergency operations from the date of promulgation until formal deactivation of the program. Changes may be incorporated as required. The Community Emergency Response Team program is active within Latah County, but requires formal organizational structure, policy and procedures in order to operate efficiently, effectively, legally, and safely. These procedures are to be followed by CERT members.

I. Personnel

This section provides policy, procedures, and guidance concerning matters relating to the people that comprise the Community Emergency Response Team.

A. Basic Membership Eligibility

1. Appropriate Assignments = The basic intent in staffing the CERT program is the premise: "There is a job for everyone". This premise takes into consideration that some of the volunteers may be young or old, physically fit or disabled, highly educated or less educated, and so forth. The key to success in staffing the CERT program is to assign jobs appropriate to the individual.
2. Gender = There are no barriers to gender in this program.

3. Ethnic Group or Race = There are no barriers to ethnic groups or race.
4. Disability = Many Americans with disabilities are extremely valuable if assigned to positions or duties within their capabilities. Although there may be some physical barriers which people with disabilities may not overcome, not all tasks, duties, or positions subject people to these barriers. Therefore, assignment within capability may add a valuable member to the team that otherwise would have been overlooked or excluded.
5. Religion = There are no barriers to religion in this program.

B. Requirements For Membership

Potential CERT members should:

1. Be able both physically and mentally as required; execute any or all competencies taught during basic CERT training.
2. Not be a convicted felon or is not currently under felony charges.
3. Not be known to be a member of any terrorist or subversive organization.
4. Be of a character that can be trusted under adverse conditions where victims of disaster could be at disadvantage. (CERT members must be trusted to treat victims and their property with highest respect and dignity.)
5. Complete all the required paperwork and training to be a CERT member.

C. Chain of Command

1. All CERT activities will follow the principles of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS). CERT volunteers will report to the Incident Commander (IC) upon arrival and await assignment. All operations will fall within the established command structure and CERT volunteers will report for demobilization following their assignments.
2. Chain of command is a critical function that maintains the continuity of the operations and ensures that there is a structured conduit for operational communications and decisions. It also establishes a line of succession for leadership of the organization.
3. For the overall disaster or emergency, ICS will be used to establish leadership and operational and support functions of the available resources.
4. At the scene, the IC will be in charge. Initially, the first person of competent authority may be the IC. This could be a professional public safety or emergency management official, or it could even be a CERT member.

D. Liabilities

1. All volunteers MUST sign the general release of liability form.

2. There are important rules to follow to be reasonably safe during activation:
 - a. CERT instructors have been trained by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) at Emmitsburg, Maryland.
 - b. CERT instructors teach the CERT, along with local volunteers experienced in the fields that pertain to the training, program according to the CERT Instructor and Participant Manuals promulgated by FEMA, and there is no topical variance from these manuals. Instructors should ensure that each student has demonstrated competencies in all topics of discussion.
 - c. That CERT team members have completed the CERT and have received their training certificate.
 - d. That CERT members are aware of the limits of operation as CERT volunteers.
 - e. That CERT activates and deploy only as specified in this Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) manual.
 - f. That CERT teams rehearse and train on a regular basis using skills taught in their basic training course.
 - g. That CERT members learn to communicate all important issues to their leadership during the course of emergency operations, and that everything is documented appropriately.

E. Personnel Accountability

1. In all CERT operations, training or actual emergency response, personnel accountability will be established and maintained. Leaders will always know the location and mission of their personnel. CERT teams conducting emergency operations (or training operations) will use the proper form in the ICS packet. This Sheet will be maintained by the Team Leader.
2. Personnel accountability will be checked at the initiation of the emergency operations, at regular periods thereafter, and at the end of the CERT emergency operations. If a member is missing, the team will make every attempt to determine whereabouts and re-establish accountability.
3. Victims under control of the CERT team will also be carefully accounted for using the Victim Treatment Form. Victims will be listed in the Medical Triage and Medical Treatment areas. The list will be checked every 30 minutes to ensure victims are resent and/or accounted for. All transfers to other locations or release to Emergency Medical Services (EMS) or ambulance will be documented.

F. Identification and Equipment

1. All equipment, identification, and materials issued to the CERT volunteer are the property of Latah County and must be returned upon request. CERT volunteers are encouraged to supplement their equipment ensemble with items they feel are useful and appropriate. Equipment that is determined to be outside the scope-of-practice of CERT (firearms, chain saws, etc.) are not authorized for inclusion in the volunteers equipment bag.
2. CERT volunteers are expected to maintain their equipment in proper working order and to bring the equipment to all necessary training sessions, exercises and incidents. Equipment that is lost, stolen or broken is to be reported immediately to CERT leadership. Remnants of broken equipment should also be returned.
3. Latah County CERT volunteers will be readily identified by wearing the CERT green helmet, green ves, and photo ID badges. All public safety and emergency management organizations throughout the county will be made aware of these distinctive regalia. CERT volunteers will openly display the photo ID when in a duty status.

II. Operations

A. Utilization

1. CERT teams are primarily intended for use during disasters or large scale local emergencies where firefighters, law enforcement and emergency medical services are overwhelmed, yet there is a need for immediate assistance by the victims. CERT teams and/or members are not intended to be used for routine emergencies such as house fires, car wrecks, heart attacks, etc.
2. CERT teams can operate in a pre-determined area of operations, or be directed by an IC to operate at a specified location relevant to a disaster.
3. CERT teams should only be used in situations for which they are trained, and execute tasks within the scope of their training. They can operate in buildings with moderate to light damage as long as, in the judgment of the person in charge, the structure is safe. They can conduct light search and rescue (SAR), suppress small fires, conduct medical triage, conduct light medical treatment, and organize the area for relief by appropriate agencies when they arrive.
4. CERT teams should not be used for law enforcement, heavy fire fighting, heavy SAR, complex and technical medical treatment and procedures.
5. CERT teams may be used to assist professional public safety personnel in the logistical and administrative support. They may also be used in a non-disaster situation as public safety or emergency management resources of a low risk nature.

B. Activation

1. **Spontaneous Response:** Latah County CERT recognizes that a volunteer may find themselves suddenly involved in an emergency that happens in their home, neighborhood, workplace or immediate area, or they may come upon an emergency in the course of normal activities. In such spontaneous incidents, CERT volunteers:

- ◆ Should ensure that emergency response authorities have been contacted with accurate information.
- ◆ Identify themselves as a CERT volunteer to 911 operators and emergency responders when appropriate.
- ◆ May render assistance within their current training and abilities.
- ◆ Shall relinquish command of the scene to proper authorities upon their arrival and may render assistance as requested by IC.

2. **Inappropriate Self-Deployment:** CERT volunteers are prohibited from self-deploying to routine emergencies in which they are not immediately involved nor requested. Such inappropriate self-deployment is a barrier to proper emergency response and may result in immediate suspension and termination.

3. **Activation:** CERT volunteers may often be notified before specific response needs are determined. This is to enable local authorities the opportunity to assess the resources available, stage and deploy these resources.

C. Deactivation

Normally, CERT teams will be deactivated by County Disaster Services, irrespective of how they are activated. This is to ensure all information has been passed, and that everyone has been accounted for.

D. Search and Rescue

1. **Search.** CERT team members may conduct light search and rescue operations within their zone of activity using the techniques and methods taught during their CERT basic training course. Search means to seek victims in the disaster area using controlled and organized methods. Structures will receive a good external size-up prior to entry by CERT members. CERT members may only enter structures that, as a maximum, are moderately to lightly damaged. Structures judged as unsafe will not be searched. The size-up will include locating and de-energizing or turning off of utilities such as gas, electricity, and water. Utilities will be de-energized if, in the opinion of the person in charge and depending upon the situation on the scene, that the utility could pose a threat to life, limb, or property. Once turned off, utilities will be marked at the shutoff point

(valve or box) with the date, time, and person shutting it off. Gas lines will NOT be turned on by anyone other than gas company personnel.

2. **Rescue.** CERT members may conduct light rescue. Rescue is to remove a victim from peril. Techniques for removal such as cribbing, cutting, lifting, clearing, carrying, etc. should not exceed the capabilities of the team, nor should they degrade the safety of all present. An example of degrading the safety of all present would be to change the structure integrity to extricate a victim. The structural change could cause the building to collapse.

E. Non-Emergency Operations

The CERT may be used for non-emergency operations as long as these operations are booths at fairs, assisting at first aid tents, CERT demonstrations, assisting in the installation of smoke alarms, etc. and are within the County limits.

III. Documentation

A. Training Documentation

1. All training conducted for and by CERT will be documented.
2. Each class will receive documentation on: title, dates, times, locations, students completing, etc. This information will be maintained by Latah County for their use.
3. Each CERT member will have a file containing information on training received.

B. Emergency Operations Documentation

1. All CERT operations will be documented.
2. CERT leaders are responsible to furnish the CERT coordinator and/or appropriate officials on-scene (as necessary) documentation relating to the operation which includes such things as: how and when notified, how activated, arrival date and time, team members present, team organization, description of activities and results, visitations by others, logistical needs, problems encountered and solutions, date and time of stand-down order, after action report, etc.

IV. Communications

A. Written

Sometimes, due to the situation, use of telephone, cell phone, or radio may be impossible. In these situations, a messenger and written message may be used. This method should be used only for required messages or urgent messages due to the risk to the messenger.

1. Written operational communications between Latah County and CERT members in operation will contain, as a minimum, the following: sender name and phone number, position, location, receiver name, position, location, date, time, message.
2. Some messages will require acknowledgement, which means, the receiver will acknowledge receipt of the message by signature, date, and time. If the message must be returned, it can be returned by the messenger that brought it.

B. Telephonic

Telephonic messages should contain name and location of sender, phone number of the sender, and the message. If the telephonic message is being taken by someone other than the intended receiver, the sender should ask that the message be read back.

C. Radio

Messages by radio should be brief and to the point so that the frequency will not be cluttered, and batteries can be conserved. When contact is established, the sender should ensure the receiver gets the following information: sender call sign or name, location, message. If the receiver is not the person intended, the receiver should be asked to read back the message for accuracy. Until further notice, CERT members will use family system radios among the team members for internal communications. CERT HAM radio operators will also be available.

V. Training

The CERT Basic Training Course, as defined by FEMA curriculum, is the foundation of CERT training and the minimum requirement for membership. Additional training made available to CERT members by partner organizations is intended to increase their awareness, knowledge and abilities, but does not authorize members to work outside their role as CERT volunteers. Membership, training or experience in other organizations does not allow the volunteer to work outside the CERT mission as a CERT volunteer.