

You're On Your Own!

SARASOTA COUNTY CERT ACADEMY

An Introduction to the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

Did you know...

- There is a very good chance that your neighborhood will be on its own during the early stages following a catastrophic disaster.
- After a catastrophic disaster, citizens will volunteer to help. Without proper training people can expose themselves to potential injury and even death!
- Experience has shown that basic training in disaster survival and rescue skills improves the ability of citizens to survive until responders or other assistance arrives.

The Sarasota County CERT Academy Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program

Sarasota County has become a part of a national network of CERT communities. The program is designed to help neighborhoods prepare for and respond after catastrophic disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, and other major emergencies. Individuals completing CERT training may be affiliated with one or more of the following teams:

- ❑ Neighborhood CERT: Ten or more neighbors serving immediate residential neighborhood.
- ❑ Business and Civic Organizations CERT: Co-workers serving place of business and surrounding area.
- ❑ School CERT: Faculty and staff serving a particular school and the surrounding areas.
- ❑ Government Agency CERT: Government agency staff that serve a particular agency or surrounding area.
- ❑ Faith-Based CERT: Teams based at a house of worship serving the immediate neighborhood, or travel into areas that need assistance.
- ❑ Youth CERT: Organized service-oriented groups, such as Civil Air Patrol, Fire or Police Explorers, or school-based clubs.

Individuals not affiliated with a team may still be trained and serve their community.

CERT Program Goals

Once trained, a CERT will be able to provide the following services to their neighborhood:

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| Increase their neighborhood's disaster readiness | Perform light search and rescue operations |
| Extinguish small fires and teach fire safety | Organize procurement of supplies |
| Assess damage after a disaster | Perform triage/provide medical services |

CERT Course Content

The basic course will include those components necessary to get the team started and become capable of performing basic CERT functions. Each member must complete about 20 hours of class time in the following areas to become certified. Classes are scheduled to accommodate the needs of each team and are available daytime or evening, seven days a week. Teams will learn:

- **Disaster Preparedness:** Instructs students how to prepare themselves and their neighborhoods for the various hazards that may occur.
- **Team Organization and Disaster Psychology:** Addresses organization and management principles necessary for a CERT to operate successfully. Covers critical incident stress for victims and workers.
- **Medical Operations:** Students will learn to conduct triage, establish medical treatment areas, and provide basic first aid for victims.
- **Damage Assessment:** Students will learn to rapidly assess damage employing a standardized format used throughout the County.
- **Disaster Simulation:** A small-scale disaster simulation is part of the basic program.
- **Fire Suppression:** Students will learn to use extinguishers and other equipment to suppress small fires.
- **Light Search and Rescue:** Students will learn light search and rescue planning, techniques, and rescuer safety.
- **Terrorism and CERT:** Students will learn protocols and procedures for terrorist incidents and the actions that CERTs should take following a possible terrorist attack.

Continuing Education

Refresher classes are held and are open to all teams based on availability and need. Additional courses which may be helpful, but are not considered a component of CERT training: C.P.R., Communications (Amateur radio operations, hand-held), A.E.D. operations, Critical Incident Stress Management, etc.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a CERT Member? A CERT member is a person who is trained to prepare for and respond after a disaster in their neighborhood. A group of ten or more members of a neighborhood, apartment complex, business, or similar residential area comprise a team. Trained citizens not affiliated with a team may serve as individuals.

Who may join a CERT? Anyone who is interested in helping his or her neighborhood or organization prepare for a disaster and provide assistance afterward. Team training is preferred however citizens may be trained even if they are not affiliated with a team.

Where can I get more information about the CERT program and scheduled classes?

Sarasota County CERT Academy at (941) 861-5000.

CERT Website Resources

Sarasota County Emergency Services - www.scgov.net

Federal Emergency Management Agency - <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/CERT/>

Florida Div. of Emergency Mgt - http://www.floridadisaster.org/director_office/citizen_corps/CERT.htm

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