

Introduction

I. The CERT Classroom

A. Welcome and Preview

1. Research and experience has shown that citizens are often likely to be on their own during the early stages of a catastrophic disaster. Accordingly, some basic training in disaster survival and rescue skills can improve the ability of citizens to survive until responders or other assistance arrives.

2. Community Emergency Response Training is designed to prepare you to help yourself, your family, and your neighbors in the event of a catastrophic disaster. This training covers basic skills that are important to know in a disaster when emergency services are not available for the initial period immediately following a disaster, often up to 3 days or longer.

3. In this 20-hour program you will be trained in basic self-help and mutual-aid emergency functions such as: disaster preparedness, fire safety, disaster medical operations, light search and rescue, CERT organization, disaster psychology and all hazards.

B. How the class operates

1. Each unit is presented by instructors who have specific qualifications and subject matter expertise. Academic material is offered in three formats: lecture, activities and discussion.

2. Breaks are provided at regular intervals, if you need to break when one is not scheduled, please do so with minimal disruption to the learning of others.

3. Interact in ways that assist your education, question material that you need to and contribute to a safe and productive learning environment.

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C. Learning Styles

1. It is expected that all participants respect the learning styles of one another. The following information is a brief introduction to some models of how people learn. This helpful overview will assist you to effectively interact and understand those who learn differently from you¹.

2. The way your brain perceives data and processes it into information is one model of learning styles. Think about the way in which you remember directions to someone's home. Do you 'see' landmarks in your mind's eye? Do you 'hear' directions in a rhyme or rhythm? Different people process information in different ways.

3. The following four categories are the most prevalent learning styles:

a. The Visual/Verbal Learner functions best when:

- Information is presented visually in written language
- Blackboards and overhead projectors are used
- Outlines are provided to follow lectures
- Textbooks and class notes are available for follow-up
- You can study quietly in a room by yourself

b. The Visual/Nonverbal Learner functions best when:

- Information is presented visually, in picture or design format
- When instructors use visual aids
- Information in textbooks is accompanied with pictures and diagrams
- You can study in a quiet area

¹ <http://www.bilk.ac.uk/college/research/allpd/TMP1001493393.htm>

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c. The Tactile/Kinesthetic Learner functions best when:

- You can be physically engaged in activities
- You are in a 'hands-on' environment
- Instructors engage in class demonstrations
- Have the ability to do fieldwork

d. The Auditory/Verbal Learner functions best when:

- Information is presented orally
- You can listen to a lecture then participate in group discussion about its contents
- Audio tapes are available to repeat the information
- You can interact with the instructor and other participants as the information is being presented.

4. There is no perfect learning style, but there can be bad matches between how information is presented and how you learn. The key to successful learning is to understand how you learn and adapt to the environment. Consider these adaptive methods: tape recording a lecture, draw diagrams that illustrate ideas being presented, utilize video tapes to provide additional information or ask the instructor to repeat, illustrate or involve participants in the delivery of class material.

5. It is your responsibility to inform your instructor if you have special needs regarding learning. Every effort will be made to accommodate an environment that will encourage learning for you.

D. Interacting with other participants

1. Each group of participants may have individuals with differing abilities. The following information gives guidelines on how you might effectively interact with participants who have visual impairments, are deaf, hard of hearing or have mobility impairments².

² http://www.uky.edu/TLC/grants/uk_ed/etiquetteintro.html

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a. When interacting with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, follow these etiquette rules:

- People who are deaf or hard of hearing may use a variety of ways to communicate. The individual may choose to use American Sign Language, lip read, speak, write, or a combination of methods. Find out the person's preferred method and use it.
- Speak directly to the person who is deaf or hard of hearing rather than the sign language interpreter. Ask, "What did you think of the basketball game?" rather than "What did she think of the game?"
- To get the attention of a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly, and expressively to determine if the person can read your lips. Not all people with a hearing impairment can read lips.
- Place yourself so that you face the light source. If there is bright light behind you, glare makes it hard to see your face.
- Keep hands, objects, and food away from your mouth when speaking.
- Move away from noisy sources such as an air conditioner, the radio, or the television when speaking with someone who is deaf or hard of hearing.
- If the person does not understand what you are saying, rephrase it or use other words rather than repeating the same thing again and again. Communicate in writing, if necessary.
- A person who is deaf or hard of hearing may use a telecommunication device for the deaf (TDD or TTY) instead of a standard telephone. You can use a relay service to call that person, even if you do not have a TDD.

The CERT Classroom (Continued)

- Do not make assumptions about what a person can or cannot do based on his/her disability. All people with disabilities are not alike and have a wide variety of skills and personalities.

b. Interacting with Someone with a Visual Impairment - When interacting with a person who has a visual impairment or is blind, follow these etiquette rules:

- Be descriptive when talking with a person who is visually impaired. When walking with the person, you may need to help orient or warn of possible hazards. As you enter a room, describe the layout and location of furniture.
- Offer to read written information for a person with a visual impairment, when appropriate. Ask before doing so.
- When approaching a person who is blind or visually impaired, introduce yourself so the person knows who you are. If you are in a group of people, introduce everyone so that no one is excluded.
- When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking. This helps the person with a visual impairment to be able to follow the conversation.
- If you need to leave, tell the person so the individual is not alone without realizing it.
- If the person has a guide animal, do not touch it without permission. You could distract it from the task it is trained to do for the person.
- Do not take the person's arm to lead him or her around without asking. If the person would like assistance, offer your arm.

The CERT Classroom (Continued)

- Act naturally. Do not be afraid to use common phrases such as "Good to see you" or "I'll see you later." Person with a visual impairments use these expressions too.
 - If the person has a companion or attendant, talk directly to the person. Never ask the companion about the person.
 - It is not necessary to speak louder to someone who has a visual impairment. Speak in your typical voice.
 - Do not make assumptions about what a person can or cannot do based on his disability. All people with disabilities are not alike and have a wide variety of skills and personalities.
- c. Interacting with someone with a Mobility Impairment – When interacting with a person who has mobility impairment, follow these etiquette rules:
- When conversing with a person who uses a wheelchair or scooter, position yourself so that you are at eye level in front of the person to facilitate the conversation. It is preferable to sit or crouch down, when possible.
 - Do not lean or hang on a person's wheelchair or scooter. Nor should you hang a coat or bag on the person's wheelchair unless the person says to do so. These are extensions of a person's individual space.
 - Be aware of what is and what is not accessible. Rearrange furniture if there is something blocking the person's path. Offer to tell where accessible rest rooms, telephones, and water fountains are located.
 - Act naturally. Do not be afraid to use phrases like "I am going for a walk," or "I have to run." People with mobility impairments say these things too.

The CERT Classroom (Continued)

- When giving directions to a person using a wheelchair or scooter, consider distance, weather conditions, and physical obstacles the person will encounter.
- Do not assume that a person using a manual wheelchair needs to be pushed. Ask before giving any assistance.
- If the person with mobility impairment has a companion or attendant, talk directly to the person. Do not ask the companion about the person. Ask the individual with a disability.
- Do not feel sorry for a person who uses a scooter or wheelchair to get around. These mobility devices give an individual freedom to be independent.
- Be aware that people with mobility impairments have a broad spectrum of physical capabilities. Some people are able to walk for part of their day and use a wheelchair to conserve energy.
- Leave accessible parking places for those who need them. Likewise, do not park in the hatch marks of accessible spaces. These areas allow safe operation of vehicle lifts. When a vehicle is parked in the hatch marks, an individual who uses a lift may not be able to get back in his or her vehicle.
- Do not make assumptions about what a person can or cannot do based on his disability. All people with disabilities are not alike and have a wide variety of skills and personalities.

II. How CERT Developed

A. The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) concept was developed and implemented in the United States by the City of Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) in 1985. **They recognized that citizens would very likely be on their own during the early stages of a catastrophic disaster. Accordingly, LAFD decided that some basic training in disaster survival and rescue skills would improve the ability of citizens to survive until responders or other assistance could arrive.** The Whittier Narrows earthquake in 1987 underscored the area-wide threat of a major disaster in California. Further, it confirmed the need for training community members to meet immediate post-disaster needs.

B. The training program that the LAFD initiated proved to be so beneficial that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) felt that the concept and the program should be made available to communities nationwide. In 1994, the Emergency Management Institute (EMI), in cooperation with the LAFD, expanded the CERT materials to make them applicable to all hazards.

C. In 2003, the President of the United States asked all Americans to volunteer in the service of their country. The Citizen Corps program was created to spearhead this effort to harness the power of every individual through education, training, and volunteer service to make communities safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to the threats of terrorism, crime, public health issues, and disasters of all kinds. CERT was selected as one of the primary programs offered to the American public to meet this challenge.

III. The purpose of this CERT training.

A. If available, emergency services personnel are the best trained and equipped to handle emergencies, and you should use them. However, following a catastrophic disaster, you and the community may be on your own for a period of time because of the size of the area affected, lost communications, and un-passable roads.

B. The mission of this course is to train people from a variety of communities to help individuals and groups prepare themselves, their families, coworkers and neighbors in the event of a catastrophic disaster. Because emergency services personnel will not be able to help everyone immediately, you can make a difference by using the training in this Participant Manual to save lives and protect property.

The purpose of this CERT training (Continued)

C. This training covers basic skills that are important to know in a disaster when emergency services are not available. With training and practice and by working as a team, you will be able to do the greatest good for the greatest number of victims after a disaster, while protecting yourself from becoming a victim.

IV. When disaster strikes

A. The damage caused by natural disasters and man-made events such as earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, flooding, and terrorism can affect all elements of society and government. These events might:

1. Restrict or overwhelm our response resources, communications, transportation, and utilities.
2. Many individuals and neighborhoods cut off from outside support.

B. It takes time for emergency response agencies to set up and prepare for an organized response. Damaged roads and disrupted communications systems may restrict their access into critically affected areas. Thus, for the initial period immediately following a disaster³/₄ often up to 3 days or longer³/₄ individuals, households and neighborhoods may need to rely on their own resources for: food, water, first aid and shelter.

C. Individual preparedness, planning, survival skills, and mutual aid within neighborhoods and worksites during this initial period are essential measures in coping with the aftermath of a disaster.

V. Community Preparedness

A. Community-based preparedness planning allows us to prepare for and respond to anticipated disruptions and potential hazards following a disaster. As individuals, we can prepare our homes and families to cope during that critical period. Through pre-event planning, neighborhoods and worksites can also work together to help reduce injuries, loss of lives, and property damage. Neighborhood preparedness will enhance the ability of individuals and neighborhoods to reduce their emergency needs and to manage their existing resources until professional assistance becomes available.

Community Preparedness (Continued)

B. Studies of behavior following disasters have shown that groups working together in the disaster period perform more effectively if there has been prior planning for disaster response. These studies show that organized grassroots efforts may be more successful if they are woven into the social and political fabric of the community¾neighborhood associations, schools, workplaces, places of worship, and other existing organizations.

C. Effective response requires comprehensive planning and coordination of all who will be involved¾government, volunteer groups, private businesses, schools, and community organizations. With training and information, individuals and community groups can be prepared to serve as a crucial resource capable of performing many of the emergency functions needed in the immediate post-disaster period. The Community Emergency Response Training (CERT) program is designed to help communities prepare for effective disaster response through training and planning.

VI. The CERT Training Program Overview

A. In this 20 hour training program you will be trained in such basic self-help and mutual-aid emergency functions such as:

1. Disaster preparedness
2. Understanding Emergency Management
3. Fire safety
4. Disaster medical operations
5. Light search and rescue
6. CERT organization
7. Disaster Communication
8. Disaster Psychology
9. All Hazards and the role of CERT

B. Classes are taught by trained emergency personnel, including firefighters and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel. The program consists of 20 hours of training and emphasizes hands-on practice.

C. Upon completion of the course, you will receive a certificate and may receive identification that will identify you as an emergency response team member during disaster response. You should obtain additional safety equipment, such as goggles, gloves, and basic first aid supplies and have them available for use during a disaster. If you are a member of a business or industry training group, your employer may supply these items for you.

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The CERT Training Program (Continued)

D. Training in disaster response should not be a one-time event. Awareness, commitment, and skills must be reinforced through follow-up training and repeated practice to maintain the edge necessary for effective response in the face of a disaster. To maintain your skill level and continually improve performance, you and your team members should participate in continuing supplemental training when offered in your area. Working through practice disaster scenarios with other teams will provide opportunities not only for extended practice but for valuable networking with teams in the local area.

End of Introduction