

Unit Seven: CERT Organization

I. Unit Overview and Objectives

A. Unit Overview

1. In previous units, you learned specific strategies and tasks to use in specific situations. In this unit, you will use that knowledge in a team environment, using the CERT organization as a foundation.

B. Objectives

1. By listening, participating and interacting in class activities, by the end of this unit participants should be able to accurately:

- a. Describe the CERT organization.
- b. Identify how individuals trained in CERT interrelate with the Incident Command System (ICS).
- d. Explain CERT documentation requirements.

II. What is CERT and what does CERT do?

A. Community Emergency Response Teams are formed by community members and are designed to prepare individuals to help themselves, their families and neighbors in the event of a catastrophic disaster. CERT members receive basic training in disaster survival and rescue skills which improve the ability of citizens to survive until responders or other assistance arrives.

B. Emergency service capability can be greatly enhanced by well-organized, well-trained, and well-managed CERTs that are able to:

1. Prepare in advance of a disaster event.
2. Respond in their communities to address immediate needs brought about by the disaster.

C. As CERT members your role is to prepare for a disaster by:

1. Identifying potential structural and nonstructural hazards in your home and workplace.
2. Reducing the hazards to the degree possible before a disaster strikes.
3. Developing a disaster supply kit.

D. CERTs respond after a disaster by:

1. Locating and turning off utilities, if safe to do so.
2. Extinguishing small fires.
3. Deliver first aid to the injured until professional help arrives.
4. Conducting light search and rescue operations.
5. Helping disaster survivors cope with their emotional stressors.

E. The key CERT functions include:

1. Fire safety.
2. Medical operations.
3. Light search and rescue.
4. Effective disaster communication and psychology.

III. CERT roles in recent disasters

A. There are many instances of CERT members' participation in disaster response. During the Northridge Earthquake the following use of CERTs were recorded:

1. Search: 203
2. Rescue: 17
3. Medical treatment: 57
4. Patient transport: 4
5. Fire suppression: 5
6. Utility control: 156

B. In Alachua County, FL, during Hurricane Floyd in 1999 and during Tropical Storm Gordon in 2000, CERTs were called by the EOC to contact residents to ensure that they were aware of the approaching storms and to ascertain how public shelters and transportation could be made accessible to everyone in need in the community. The CERTs arranged transportation as necessary.

C. About a dozen CERTs were used during the Hidden Lake and Lake Louise fires in 2000 to provide food for the firefighters, move supplies, and assist with preparation in the area.

D. The CERT concept has extended from its original purpose as a response operation following catastrophic disasters. CERTs are now activated for a wide range of emergencies. For example, in Whatcom County, WA, CERT members were used in the following situations:

1. Whatcom Creek gasoline pipeline explosion (Olympic Pipeline)
2. Explosion at the Georgia-Pacific Pulp & Paper Mill
3. Y2K Emergency Operations Center activation
4. Sandy Point wind and flood event
5. Nisqually earthquake

CERT Roles in Recent Disasters (continued)

E. The CERT members who responded to the Whatcom Creek incident received The American Red Cross Real Heroes award for their contributions. CERT members in the county have received Federal, State, and local recognition for their response efforts.

F. CERT members also are a potential volunteer pool for the community. They can help with projects such as:

1. Distributing preparedness materials.
2. Staffing medical booths during special events.
3. Assisting with the installation of smoke alarms for community members requesting assistance in doing so.

G. Additionally, in his January 29, 2002, State of the Union address, the President asked that Americans volunteer their services to improve and safeguard our country. The three areas of emphasis for these volunteer efforts are crime, natural disasters, and terrorism. The Citizen Corps Program was created to help Americans meet this call to service. One of the volunteer opportunities offered to the American public under the Citizen Corps umbrella is the CERT program.

H. After completing initial CERT training, many CERT members seek to expand and improve their skills—through continuing CERT modules offered locally, courses offered through The American Red Cross, or programs from other sources. Some CERT members have sought additional training opportunities in:

1. Shelter management.
2. Community relations.
3. Donations management.
4. Special needs concerns.
5. Debris removal.
6. Utilities control.
7. Advanced first aid.
8. Automated External Defibrillator use.
9. CPR skills.

IV. Protection for Disaster Workers

A. As volunteers, CERT members functioning in emergency services are generally protected by “Good Samaritan” laws that protect people who provide emergency care in a prudent and reasonable manner.

B. In a disaster, CERT members are also protected by the Volunteer Protection Act of 1997, a Federal law that protects volunteers from liability as long as they are acting in accordance with the training that they have received.

C. People who volunteer their services during a disaster are generally Protected by Federal, State, and/or local laws. Most States have “Good Samaritan” laws that protect people who provide emergency care in a prudent and reasonable manner to ill or injured persons. Other city, county, or State laws may also apply. Your instructor will provide information about laws that apply in your area. Record the key points below for future reference.

V. CERT Organization

A. Emergency on-scene management in a disaster situation is needed to:

1. Maintain the safety of disaster workers. CERT Incident Commanders must continually prioritize response activities based on the team’s capability and training and the principle that rescuer safety is the number-one concern. CERT functional leadership assigns activities and accounts for team members. CERT team members work in the buddy system and respond based on their size-up of the situations that they encounter.

2. Provide clear leadership and organizational structure by developing a chain of command and roles that are known by all team members. Each CERT member has only one person that he or she takes direction from and responds to.

3. Improve the effectiveness of rescue efforts. Disaster information is collected and responses are prioritized based on rescuer safety and doing the greatest good for the greatest number according to the team’s capabilities and training.

B. The need For CERT Organization – The specific CERT organizational structure now in use provides:

CERT Organization (Continued)

1. Common terminology that contributes to effective communication and shared understanding.
2. Effective communication among team members.
3. A well-defined management structure (e.g., leadership, functional areas, reporting chain, working in teams).
4. Accountability.

C. The CERT organization fulfills these requirements, and also has the advantage of:

1. Common terminology that contributes to effective communication and shared understanding.
2. Consolidated action plans that coordinate strategic goals, tactical objectives, and support activities.
3. Comprehensive resource management that facilitates application of available resources to the right incident in a timely manner.
4. A manageable span of control that provides for a desirable rescuer/supervisor ratio of between three and seven rescuers per supervisor.

D. Objectives of CERT Organization – In a disaster situation, CERT organization:

1. Identifies the scope of the incident. (What is the problem?)
2. Determines an overall strategy. (What can we do, and how will we do it?)
3. Deploys teams and resources. (Who is going to do what?)
4. Documents actions and results.

CERT Organization (Continued)

E. CERT organizational framework is flexible, it can expand or contract depending on the on-going assessment priorities determined by the IC, and people and resources available. This expansion and contraction helps ensure rescuer safety, doing the greatest good for the greatest number, manageable span of control and accountability of personnel.

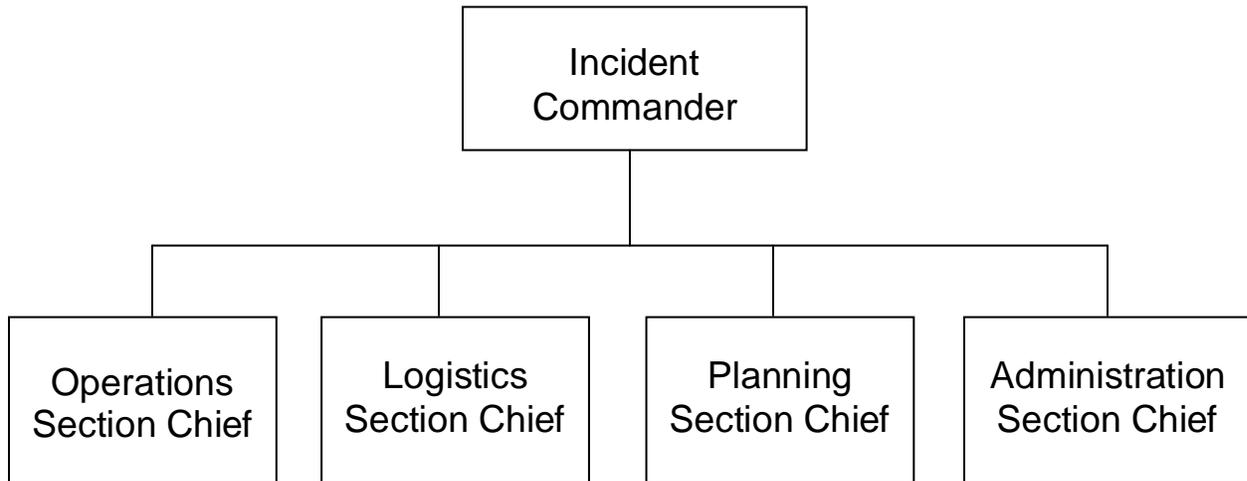
F. Incident Command System – The Incident Command System (ICS) is the system used by fire and law enforcement agencies to manage emergency operations. When CERT members activate as a team for their neighborhood or workplace they become part of that system. By interrelating with ICS, CERT members who respond as a team:

1. Are a part of the emergency management ICS.
2. Report to the first fire or law enforcement official at their location and take directions from that person until told that the command system has changed, or until relieved.

G. How ICS forms at the scene of an emergency or disaster – The basic ICS structure is established by the person who arrives first to the scene, who becomes the Incident Commander. Initially, the Incident Commander may handle all of the command positions shown in the visual, but as the incident evolves, may assign personnel as the:

1. Operations Section Chief.
2. Logistics Section Chief.
3. Planning Section Chief.
4. Administration Section Chief.

**Unit Seven: CERT Organization
Visual One: Incident Command System
Command Function Organization Chart**



ICS Command Function Organization Chart

ICS Command Function Organization Chart, showing the Incident Commander at the top and the four Section Chiefs (i.e., Operations, Logistics, Planning, and Admin) reporting to the Incident Commander.

H. As the incident expands, it may be necessary to assign other personnel in each section to handle specific aspects of the response while maintaining an effective span of control.

VI. CERT Structure

A. The following points about CERT structure are important:

1. Each CERT must establish a command structure.
2. A CERT Leader—or, in ICS terms, Incident Commander—is appointed to direct team activities. For CERT volunteer activities and training, this person may be appointed. However, during activation for a disaster, this person is the first to arrive at a pre-designated staging area.
3. The location established by the CERT Leader as the central point for command and control of the incident is called the Command Post for the CERT. The IC stays in the command post. If the IC has to leave, the responsibility of IC must be delegated to someone in the command post.
4. The CERT Leader may appoint members to assist with managing resources, services, and supplies (logistics). CERT Leaders may also appoint members to collect and display information (planning/intelligence) and collect and compile documentation. To maintain span of control, this delegation occurs as the organization expands.
5. The CERT may operate as a single team that performs all activities as required, or may be divided into smaller teams (under Operations) of at least three people to achieve specific goals developed by the IC (e.g., fire suppression, medical, search and rescue), with a leader for each.
6. In all situations, each unit assigned must have an identified leader to supervise tasks being performed to account for team members, and to report information to his or her designated leader.

B. CERT personnel should always be assigned to teams consisting of at least three persons:

1. One person will serve as a runner and communicate with the Command Post.
2. Two people will “buddy up” to respond to the immediate needs.

C. The Logistics and Planning Sections may be expanded in the same way with:

1. Logistics including Service and Support units.
2. Planning including Situation and Status units.

VII. CERT Decision Making

A. CERT Mobilization – Following the incident, CERT members take care of themselves, their families, their homes, and their neighbors.

1. If the Standard Operating Procedure calls for self-activation, CERT members proceed to the pre-designated staging area with their disaster supplies. Along the way, they make damage assessments that would be helpful for the CERT IC's decision making.

2. The first CERT member at the staging area becomes the initial IC for the response. As other CERT members arrive, the CERT IC may pass leadership to someone more qualified. Otherwise, the CERT IC develops the organization to ensure effective communication, to maintain span of control, maintain accountability, and do the greatest good for the greatest number without placing CERT members in harm's way.

3. As intelligence (information) is collected and assessed, from CERT members reporting to the staging area, emergency volunteers, and reports from working teams [e.g., search and rescue] by the planning function, the IC must prioritize actions and work with the Section Chiefs or leaders. The CERT organization is flexible and evolves based on new information.

4. Following an incident, information and, therefore, priorities, may be changing rapidly. Communication between the IC and response teams ensures that CERT members do not overextend their resources or supplies.

B. Rescuer Safety

1. Effective emergency scene management requires the formulation and communication of strategic goals and tactical objectives that are based primarily on the safety of rescue personnel.

2. **Rescuer safety is paramount.** The question, "Is it safe for the CERT members to attempt the rescue?" is primary. The answer to this question is based mainly on the degree of damage to the structure.

CERT Decision Making (Continued)

<p align="center">Unit Seven: CERT Organization Chart One: CERT Rescue Efforts Based On Degree Of Damage</p>	
<p align="center">Degree Of Damage</p>	<p align="center">Should Rescue Be Attempted?</p>
<p align="center">Heavy</p>	<p>No. Too dangerous to enter.</p> <p>Warn people to stay away.</p>
<p align="center">Moderate</p>	<p>Yes, but perform only quick and safe removals; limit onsite medical care to checking for breathing, stopping major bleeding, and treating for shock.</p> <p>Minimize the number of rescuers inside the building.</p>
<p align="center">Light</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>Locate, triage, and prioritize removal of victims to the designated treatment area.</p>

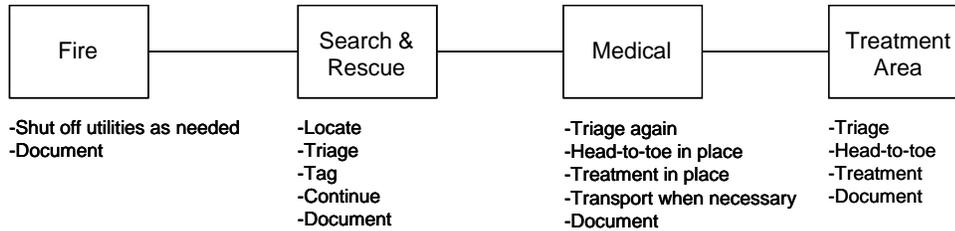
CERT Decision Making (Continued)

Unit Seven, Chart Two: Strategies For Damaged Structures		
Light	Moderate	Heavy
<p>Superficial damage, broken windows, fallen plaster, major damage is to contents of building.</p>	<p>Visible signs of minor structural damage; decorative work that is damaged or fallen; many visible cracks in plaster; building still attached to foundation; major damage is to contents of building.</p>	<p>Partial or total collapse of walls and/or ceilings; obvious structural instability; tilting; off foundation; heavy smoke or fire; gas leaks; hazardous materials inside; rising or moving water.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secure building utilities (as needed). 2. Establish and coordinate search and rescue teams with medical triage personnel. 3. Establish “I” and “D” treatment areas. 4. Primary Mission: Locate, triage, and prioritize removal of victims to designated treatment area. 5. Continue evacuation process until all victims have been removed and accounted for. 6. Reassess structural stability and available resources for heavy rescue problems. Communicate and document location of trapped and/or missing persons to emergency personnel. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secure building utilities (gas, electrical, water). 2. Gather information. 3. Establish control person at exit and entry points. 4. Establish and coordinate two- to four-person rescue teams. 5. Primary Mission: Locate, stabilize, and evacuate victims to a safe area minimizing number of rescuers in buildings. 6. Perform triage and other medical care in a safe area. 7. Continue rescuing lightly trapped victims until complete or not safe. 8. Continue size-up. 9. Communicate and document location of trapped or deceased. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communicate the location and extent of damage to emergency services personnel. 2. Secure building perimeter and warn untrained and well-intentioned volunteers about danger and entry into building. 3. Primary Mission: From the exterior of the building, attempt to shut off gas (if it is possible and safe to do so). 4. Gather available information from survivors or witnesses for professional rescue teams.

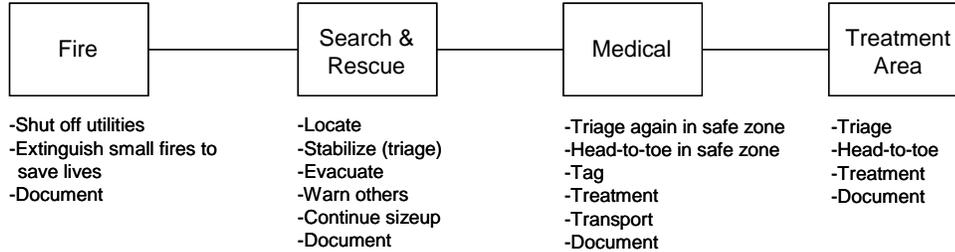
Unit Seven: CERT Organization
Chart Three: Team Tasks Based On Damage Level

The extent of involvement for the various CERT functional teams varies depending on the level of damage encountered.

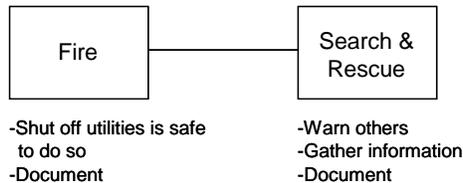
Light Damage



Moderate Damage



Heavy Damage



Team Tasks Based On Damage Level

Tasks required of Fire, Search and Rescue, Medical, and Treatment Area teams based on the degree of damage to the structure.

CERT Decision Making (Continued)

VIII. Documentation

A. It is vital to document and communicate information about the disaster situation and resource status. Efficient flow of information makes it possible for resources to be deployed effectively and for professional emergency services to be applied appropriately. Under the CERT organization, each level of authority has documentation responsibilities:

1. Section Chiefs are responsible for providing the Command Post with ongoing information about damage assessment, group status, and ongoing needs.
2. The Command Post is responsible for documenting the situation status, including:
 - a. Incident locations.
 - b. Access routes.
 - c. Identified hazards.
 - d. Support locations.

B. Note that support locations include the:

1. Staging area.
2. Medical treatment and triage area.
3. Morgue, if there are fatalities.

C. This documentation must be provided to the first professional responders on the scene. This information is vital for tracking the overall situation.

D. Forms for Documentation – There are several standard forms that can be used to facilitate documentation and information flow. The following pages offer examples of forms for: damage assessment, personnel resources, equipment resources, incident briefing, message form, incident status, victim treatment area record.

Unit Seven: CERT Organization Chart Four: Forms Used For Response Documentation	
Form	Purpose
Damage Assessment Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed by CERT leaders. Provides a summary of overall hazards in selected areas, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fires. ○ Utility hazards. ○ Structural damage. ○ Injuries and casualties. ○ Available access. • Essential for prioritizing and formulating action plans.
Personnel Resources Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed by CERT members as they arrive at the Staging Area. Provides information about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Who is on site? ○ When they arrived. ○ When they were assigned. ○ Their special skills. • Used by Staging personnel to track personnel availability.
Equipment Resources Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed by Logistics and Staging Area personnel to track the loan of equipment to CERT members.
Incident Briefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed by the Incident Commander (Team Leader) to identify damage, known hazards, and actions taken.
Message Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used for sending messages between command levels and groups. Messages should be clear and concise and should focus on such key issues as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assignment completion. ○ Additional resources required. ○ Special information. ○ Status update.
Incident Status Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used by the command post for keeping abreast of situation status. Contains essential information for tracking personnel assignments.
Victim Treatment Area Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed by Medical Treatment Area personnel to record victims entering the treatment area, their condition, and their status.

CERT Organization

Documentation (Continued)

Personnel Resources Form

Date: 10/20/01	Person Reporting: Mary Smith						Page #: 1	
Print Name and Time In							Skill Specialty Rank From 1-5 or Print "No"	
Name	Time In	Time Assigned	Fire	Medical	S&R	Transport	Document	Other
Mary Smith	9:15	9:15						Personnel & Equipment Mgr.
Jim Cox	9:15	9:15						Incident Commander
Jerry Graczika	9:32	10:05	1	2	no	3	no	
Lola Lorenz	9:35	10:00	2	3	1	4	no	
Jose Marsh	9:43	10:05	2	1	4	3	no	radio
Kelly Jordan	9:45	10:00	3	2	1	4	5	
Dave Mesaros	9:50	10:00	1	2	3	4	5	
Sue Messar	9:50	10:00	1	no	2	3	no	
Patti Kalinquin	9:50	10:00	2	3	1	4	5	
Jeanine Cobbs	9:52	10:05	1	2	4	5	3	
Maria Amilcar	9:55	10:00	1	no	2	3	no	
Fred Williams	9:58	10:03	1	2	3	no	4	heavy equipment to Treatment Area
Doak Marris	10:03	10:03	3	2	1	5	4	catering truck
Leah Roberts	10:11		2	3	1	4	5	
Gretta Fritz	10:19		1	3	2	5	4	
Winston Basset	12:00		2	1	4	3	no	radio

FOR USE BY LOGISTICS AND STAGING www.cert-la.com 10/08/05

Have people sign in and mark their special skills. When you assign someone to a team, circle that team's box next to their name and enter the time assigned. When someone returns from an assignment, draw a line through their name and all boxes and have the person sign in again. Remember to check how long people have been assigned and who hasn't been assigned yet.

Documentation (Continued)

Incident Briefing Form

Prepared By: Bella Martin		Date: 10/20/01	Time: 9:50
Incident Name: 13267 Magnolia			
Map Sketch: 			
Current Organization:	Incident Commander: Bella Martin	Battalion: 8	
Summary of Current Actions Be aware of hazards! Work as a team! Gas, electricity, water shut off. Found and removed 6 victims. 1 dead inside. Treated 1 minor, 3 delayed and 2 immediate. Transported 6 victims to treatment area, then transported 3 victims to Kaiser Hospital.			

FOR INCIDENT COMMANDER www.cert-la.com 10/08/05

Incident Command: Transfer an incident from Damage Assessment sheet. Sketch a map of the incident area, if known, with any hazards. Enter Incident Commander's name and Battalion number under current organization. Give to incident team leader with Assignment Status sheet.

Incident team leader: Sketch a map of the incident area with any hazards, if not done by Incident Command. Summarize the actions of your teams. When incident is complete, return this form, along with Assignment Status, to Incident Command.

Message Form

To: Logistics	Message Center Use Only Incident: 13267 Magnolia Time: _____ Date: 10/20/01 <input type="checkbox"/> Incoming <input type="checkbox"/> Outgoing
From: S&R 1	
Time: 10:40	
Message Text:	
Found one person trapped.	
Need 2 pry bars and enough cribbing for 2 supports, each 2 feet high	
Action Taken:	
Running short of cribbing.	
Am sending 2 pry bars and 18" of cribbing, procuring more	

USE CLEAR CONCISE TEXT www.cert-la.com 10/08/05

Examples: assignment completed, additional resources needed, unable to complete, special information/status update.

Victim Treatment Area Record Form

Date: 10/20/01		Person Reporting: Rich Richins			Page #:	
Time In:	Name or Descriptio	Triage Tag	Condition	Moved To:	Time Out	
10:19	Rich Richins	D	Minor cut on forehead			
10:35	White male, about 45 years, balding, overweight	I	Deep cut on right thigh, unconscious, shock			
10:52	Willard Scott	D	Broken left arm, swollen left ankle	Kaiser	12:08	
11:15	White female, blond, late 20's, pregnant	I	Unconscious, shallow breathing, shock	Kaiser	12:08	
11:20	White female, 60s, "Annie"	I	Disoriented, large bump on forehead, shock	Kaiser	12:08	
11:47	Jill Johns	D	Minor cuts and bruises, shock			

10/08/01

www.certla.com

FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT AREA

Document each person brought to the treatment area.
 If Victim Cannot Give Name, Write a Brief Description (e.g., Sex, Approximate Age, Hair Color, Race, etc).
 Tag color: red=Immediate, yellow=Delayed, green=Minor, Black=Dead

Documentation (Continued)

IX. Activity: ICS Functions

A. Instructions:

Using your knowledge about the five ICS functions, decide under which function the following activities would fall. Some activities may involve more than one function to be completed.

Use the following key to fill in the blanks before each activity:

IC = Incident Commander

O = Operations

P = Planning

L = Logistics

1. _____ It's dark, all the lights are out, you need additional flashlights to continue your response.
2. _____ The designated first aid site has a downed power line.
3. _____ A neighbor reports the smell of gas in his house, but he cannot shut off the gas at the meter.
4. _____ The batteries for the portable radio are dead.
5. _____ The City wants to know the overall status of your neighborhood.
6. _____ Several of your neighbors have minor injuries and need first aid.
7. _____ Fire from another neighborhood is moving toward your neighborhood.
8. _____ There is a pit bull-type dog seen wandering near the first aid station.
9. _____ A news crew has arrived with a camera to film your activities.
10. _____ Two hysterical neighbors are demanding help. One cannot find her adolescent child who was playing outside when the disaster struck. The other wants help moving a bookcase off of his wife. He says she's bleeding from a wound on the head.
11. _____ It's starting to rain. Your command post and the first aid area are not under shelter.
12. _____ Too many people are coming to the Incident Commander to ask questions. The IC asks for someone to act as a "gatekeeper."
13. _____ There is a great increase of car and foot traffic through your neighborhood because other roadways are blocked
14. _____ The Incident Commander is very tired and is going to hand over responsibilities to someone else. She wants a report on the status of the neighborhood before doing so.
15. _____ Many neighborhood residents have come to volunteer their help.
16. _____ Reports have come in of damage and injuries in the next block. Teams must be assigned to assess the situation.
17. _____ A professional responder has arrived at the scene and would like a briefing on situation status.

X. Tabletop Exercise

A. Purpose: This exercise is an interactive tabletop activity that gives you an opportunity to apply what you have learned about team organization.

B. Instructions: To complete this exercise, follow these steps:

1. Work in your table group.
2. Read the scenario distributed by the instructor.

C. Remember that CERT command objectives are to:

1. Identify the scope of the incident.
2. Determine an overall CERT strategy.
3. Set priorities and deploy resources.

D. You will have 30 minutes to complete the exercise.

NEXT . . .

1. If your CERT class continues on the same day, take your break and return to this classroom.
2. If your CERT class continues on another day (next week or next month) your **Homework Assignment** is to:
 - o Read and become familiar with Unit Eight: Disaster Communication before the next session.

End of Unit Seven