



Origins of Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)

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Following the tragic events that occurred on September 11, 2001, state and local government officials across the nation, increased opportunities for citizens to become volunteers and play integral roles in supporting emergency responders. In January 2002, the President of the United States George W. Bush launched the Citizen Corps volunteer program to capture the spirit of service that emerged throughout our communities following the terrorist attacks.

Citizen Corps was created to help coordinate volunteer activities that would make our communities safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to any emergency. It provides opportunities for people to participate in a range of measures to make their families, their homes, and their communities safer from the threats of crime, terrorism, and disasters of all kinds.

Citizen Corps is coordinated nationally by the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency. In this capacity, FEMA works closely with other federal entities, state and local governments, first responders and emergency managers, the volunteer community, and the Corporation for National & Community Service.

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) concept was developed and implemented by the Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD) in 1985. The Whittier Narrows earthquake in 1987 underscored the area-wide threat of a major disaster in California. Further, it confirmed the need for training civilians to meet their immediate needs. As a result, the LAFD created the Disaster Preparedness Division with the purpose of training citizens, private and government employees.

The training program that LAFD initiated makes good sense and furthers the process of citizens understanding their responsibility in preparing for disaster. It also increases their ability to safely help themselves, their family and their neighbors. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recognizes the importance of preparing citizens. The Emergency Management Institute (EMI) and the National Fire Academy adopted and expanded the CERT materials believing them applicable to all hazards.

OUTAGAMIE COUNTY CERT

In 2005, Wisconsin became a part of the nationally recognized Citizen Corps with several regions established throughout the state. Originally our Citizen Corp area was regional, however, local emergency managers decided that it would be in the best interest of our communities to provide coverage on a more local basis. That is how CERT was born for Outagamie County.

The Outagamie County CERT functions under the guidance and umbrella of Outagamie County Emergency Management. CERT has historically been funded through the Emergency Management budget for operating supplies and vehicle maintenance. CERT volunteers assisted have assisted with fundraiser raffle since 2016.

Originally, the CERT program obtained a decommissioned ambulance through a partnership sponsored by the Outagamie County Housing Authority. In 2016, a larger vehicle, a truck and emergency response rig was donated by the City of Appleton Fire Department. This vehicle has met our current needs, however, as the program grows, we realize its limitations. An additional air supported structure is available for a variety of larger call-outs to provide heating and cooling. This inflatable tent is somewhat cumbersome, but it has helped keep many people comfortable at the large scale emergency situations.

When CERT responds on a firefighter rehab callout we have established memorandum of understanding's (MOU) in which the liability shifts from county to local coverage. With the exception of firefighter rehab all callouts need to be approved by the Emergency Management office. Our county CERT also provides valuable services to not only Outagamie County, but other counties in Wisconsin upon request.

SUPPORTING AND INVESTING IN VOLUNTEERS

The training course that CERT offers to volunteers locally, benefits any citizen who takes it. Individuals will be better prepared to respond to and cope with the aftermath of a disaster. Additionally, if a community needs to supplement its response capability after a disaster, civilians can be recruited and trained as neighborhood, business and government teams that in essence, will be auxiliary responders. These groups can provide immediate assistance to victims in their local areas, organize spontaneous volunteers who have not had the training, and collect disaster intelligence that will assist professional responders with prioritization and allocation of resources following a disaster. Since 1993 when this training was made available nationally by FEMA, communities in all 50 states including many tribal, and United States territories.

Outagamie County Emergency Management staff, along with trained CERT volunteers and a diverse group of community professionals provide annual training at the Appleton International Airport Training Center. Firefighters, police, ambulance, Red Cross, and Victim Crisis Response Team are some of the groups and people who assist with training. The class may be taken for personal enrichment, or ideally, for recruitment of active, on-call volunteers. Initially, participants go through a 30 hour course filled with hands on, realistic training that concludes with a disaster drill that takes on a real world feel. Those who complete the training and want to be active volunteers will be placed on the callout roster. There is a role for every volunteer in CERT. Continuing training and refresher courses are also offered to all CERT volunteers at no cost.

WHAT TRAINED CERT VOLUNTEERS DO:

- Firefighter Rehab - Provide rehydration, rest, protein advancement, shelter, cooling/warming, accountability
- Search for Missing Persons – Example searched for lost children in Appleton and Grand Chute
- Response to Chemical Spills for any size corporation where Hazmat is called – Example: Appleton Papers in 2017
- Accident Reconstruction Scenes – Support law enforcement officers on scene
- Door Drops - Provide important and relevant information such as emergency weather preparedness, food safety, generator safety, and information about any local meetings or classes
- Spontaneous Volunteer Management – Leadership and accountability at situations needing many emergency volunteers
- Electronic Accountability – WICAMS- Wisconsin Credentialing and Asset Management Statewide System using Salamander Live Software
- Mass Casualty Triage – Partners with Appleton International Airport for mock drills
- Mass Casualty Sheltering – Assist partner organizations set up shelters - Example 2018 Flooding in Green Bay, WI
- Outdoor Warming/Cooling Shelter – Example: Apartment fire victims 2018 Beaver Dam, Dodge Co. WI
- Storm Damage Assessment – Tornado, wind shear, flooding – in and out of the county (by request)
- Point in Time – Pillars (formerly Homeless Connections) bi-annual accountability of homeless in the Fox Valley
- Partner with Fox Valley Humane Association to provide on-scene search and containment of traumatized pets
- Partners with other Community Volunteer Organizations – including, but not limited to: American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Team Rubicon, Fox Cities Victim Crisis Response Team
- Participates and Trains in Emergency Exercises such as Operation Dark Sky, Fox Valley Technical College Safety Center Drills, Appleton International Airport Mock Disaster with Multiple Agencies
- Continuing Education and Advanced Training - **MARC** Multi-Agency Resource Center and Sheltering workshops with Red Cross, CPR/First Aid with Gold Cross EMS
- Preparing for inclusion in Outagamie Child Abduction Response Team (**CART**) – 2018 Advanced Search Training
- CERT Volunteers are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year!

Examples of CERT being a valuable resource for the area, CERT responded to the Village of Hortonville after the tornados of August 2013 to assist in many capacities over the course of a week. The value to the community was worth \$20,000.00 in disaster fund monies to the Village.

CERT is not designed to replace any community staff, but designed to augment and support a community assisting with needs. Additionally, if a community wants to supplement its response capability after a disaster or other type of emergency or event, CERT in essence, will be auxiliary responders.

In the summer of 2018, CERT volunteers were requested to help with flood and tornado damage assessment, and helped to organize resources in Calumet County. One of the partner organizations was Team Rubicon. At the same time, other teams assisted in Fond du Lac and Portage counties with damage assessment and also worked hand in hand with the American Red Cross to distribute supplies.



Friends of CERT, Inc.

Origins of Friends of Community Emergency Response Team (FOCERT)

Now that you know about the origins of **CERT** and in particular, Outagamie County Community Emergency Response Team, the next logical question is, “what is FOCERT?”

The idea to form a vehicle to support the Outagamie County CERT program and its volunteers has been discussed for several years by its founding members, Thomas Long, Eugene Wallis, and Jim Lincoln. Finally, Friends of Community Emergency Response Team, **FOCERT** for short, became a 501c3, Wisconsin based tax-exempt, not-for-profit charitable organization in July 2018. This small, non-member organization is managed by a seven member board of directors and a county ex-officio representative.

As our logo depicts, the ***Mission of the Friends of CERT is to provide financial support to further the efforts of the Outagamie County CERT volunteer program in their quest to enhance individual and family emergency preparedness, provide quality rehabilitation services for emergency response personnel during disasters, and during extended emergencies in Outagamie County and other counties as requested.***