



Burnet County  
Office of Emergency Management  
Policy and Procedure

Directive  
Number

C 303

## Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Administrative Policy

### I. Purpose

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This policy is written to provide overall guidance and direction to staff and volunteers engaged in volunteer involvement and management efforts. These policies do not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personnel agreement.

Burnet County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) reserves the exclusive right to change any of these policies at any time and to expect adherence to the changed policy. Changes to or exceptions from these policies may only be granted by the Burnet County Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC) of OEM and must be obtained in advance and in writing.

### II. Definition of CERT Volunteer

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A CERT Volunteer is an individual who has completed the official Burnet County CERT Volunteer Program Training and has received a certificate of completion. CERT volunteers perform response activities without compensation or expectation of compensation. A CERT volunteer must be officially accepted and enrolled in the program prior to performance of the task. CERT volunteers shall not be considered as "employees" of OEM or Burnet County.

#### A. CERT (Who We Are)

- The Burnet County CERT Program is managed by OEM. Funding is provided primarily through an annual Citizen Corps Program Grant.
- CERT volunteers are a group of individuals who receive special training that enhances their ability to respond to, and recover from a major emergency or disaster situation.
- Training for Burnet County CERT Volunteers is provided by emergency responders and emergency management personnel in areas that will help them take care of themselves and others before, during, and after a major emergency.

- CERT volunteers can provide vital services by assisting those in distress in the absence of emergency responders. CERT volunteers can provide vital support to first responders in non-emergency situations as well.

## **B. Training**

- Training for all CERT volunteers will be provided by OEM, Burnet County public safety personnel, and representatives from other professional organizations.
- Students attend a 7-week CERT training program. Each class in the program lasts approximately three hours.
- Students must complete six out of seven training classes and pass a Criminal Background Investigation (CBI) in order to graduate, become a certified CERT volunteer, and receive equipment and a County issued ID.
- Advanced training will periodically be offered for CERT volunteers to improve their skills as well as for any specialized teams that may require special training. Attending advanced training is not required for CERT volunteers but may be required to become part of a specialized team.

## **C. Equipment**

- If a volunteer leaves the area or terminates their involvement in CERT, it shall be their responsibility to inform OEM of their departure from the Program.
- CERT volunteers will be provided with a CERT tee shirt, hat, safety vest, hardhat, CERT identification, and a backpack containing rescue and first aid equipment after completing training and passing a CBI.
- Burnet County OEM will provide a list of optional equipment volunteers may choose to purchase on their own.

## **III. Representing the Program**

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Volunteers are asked **NOT** to contact organizations or individuals on behalf of OEM, or the Community Emergency Response Team Volunteer Program, unless they are given express direction or approval to do so by the OEM. These actions may include, but are not limited to, public statements to the press, coalition or lobbying efforts with other organizations, or any agreements involving contractual or other financial obligations.

### **A. Confidentiality**

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information, including medical information, to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer, whether this information involves staff, volunteer(s), other person(s) or involves

overall agency business. Failure to maintain confidentiality will result in termination of the volunteer's relationship with OEM.

**B. Dismissal of a Volunteer**

Volunteers who do not adhere to the policies, rules and procedures of OEM, and the Community Emergency Response Team Volunteer Program or who fail to satisfactorily perform their volunteer assignment(s) are subject to dismissal. No volunteer will be terminated until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with OEM supervisory staff. Possible grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Gross misconduct
- Theft of property
- Misuse of agency materials
- Abuse or mistreatment of community members, staff or other volunteers
- Failure to abide by agency policies, rules and procedures
- Failure to satisfactorily perform assigned duties
- Release of confidential information
- Repeatedly not showing up for assignments or Committee obligations without notifying program staff
- Failure to comply with Zero Tolerance policies
- Inappropriate use or behavior while wearing a County issued identification badge
- Inappropriate behavior while wearing County issued uniform items

**C. Ending Volunteer Role**

Volunteers are requested to inform OEM in writing if they need to resign as a volunteer from the CERT Volunteer Program.

**D. Tracking of Hours**

Volunteers are required to keep track of their training and service hours on the forms that are provided. These logs are to be turned in to OEM. These hours are used as documentation for grantors, of the monetary value of volunteer hours provided to Burnet County.

**E. Volunteer Opportunities**

Generally, training and volunteer opportunities will be sent via email to the volunteer mailing list, and kept on file at OEM. Volunteers are asked to contact program staff about opportunities for which they want to volunteer and to schedule specific days and hours of volunteer service. In some cases, volunteers having specialized skills or talents will be contacted for specific opportunities, i.e. language translation or interpretation.

Volunteers who are unable to make a scheduled volunteer assignment are expected to contact the designated program staff as soon as possible. Repeated unexcused absences will result in the volunteer being asked to resign.

**F. Updating Contact Information**

Volunteers are responsible for updating their contact information with OEM program staff. Call-outs are not effective if volunteers cannot be reached. Returned emails and inaccurate phone numbers will result in volunteers being changed to an inactive status until the information is updated.

**G. Accidents or Injuries**

Any accidents or injuries occurring while activated or on assignment must be reported to the OEM program staff immediately and an accident report must be completed. Volunteers do not qualify for benefit coverage under any of the Burnet County plans (including Workers' Compensation, Unemployment Compensation, Employee Assistance Program, liability coverage, accident coverage or hospital/medical plans).

**H. Attire**

Volunteers are expected to and must wear appropriate attire while training or on assignments from OEM, and the CERT Volunteer Program.

**I. Telephone calls**

During a volunteer activation or an assignment, personal calls should be kept to a minimum.

**J. County-Owned, Leased or Rental Equipment and Gear**

From time to time it may become necessary to issue volunteers Burnet County equipment or gear for use in accomplishing an assignment. The equipment or gear is to be signed out by the volunteer and then returned to OEM. If the gear is not returned, a replacement fee will be charged to the volunteer. Examples are foul weather gear that would be necessary if a volunteer is requested to perform a task during severe weather or hand held GPS equipment, radios, vehicles or any rented or leased equipment.

**K. Identification Badges**

- Identification badges are the property of Burnet County. OEM will maintain a record of every volunteer issued an identification badge. Identification badges are for official OEM and the CERT Volunteer Program activity use only.
- Identification badges are only issued to CERT Volunteers who have successfully passed the Burnet County Criminal Background Investigation conducted by the Burnet County OEM.
- Identification badges may only be issued by OEM staff and current CERT Board Members.
- Identification badges must be worn in an appropriate, visible location.
- Identification badges lost or stolen must be reported immediately to OEM.
- Repeated loss of an identification badge may result in a three month revocation of the ID. During this three month revocation the member is not eligible to be activated or be put on an assignment.
- Identification badges must be returned to OEM upon termination or resignation of service.
- Use of County issued identification badges in an inappropriate manner as determined by Volunteer Personnel Policy will result in termination from the program.

**L. Uniform Items**

Volunteers should wear their CERT cap, t-shirt, long pants or jeans, and sturdy shoes when responding to an activation or representing CERT at an event or meeting.

- CERT uniforms should only be worn when responding or representing CERT at an event or meeting.
- CERT uniforms are not intended to be worn as daily “street wear”.
- CERT members should behave in a professional and appropriate manner when wearing CERT uniform items including: shirts, jackets, hats and vests.
- Volunteers must adhere to CERT Program Policy while wearing uniform items such as shirts, jackets, vests, etc. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in termination from the program.

#### IV. Activation of Teams

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##### A. CERT Volunteers may be activated in one of three ways:

1. **Self Activation** – A CERT Volunteer who responds to an emergency or disaster scene with the intent of rendering emergency response and recovery assistance **without** having received a direct request for assistance from a representative of an authorized Burnet County public safety agency. “Self activation” ONLY occurs when CERT Volunteers respond to an emergency that occurs in close proximity to their physical location – such as their neighborhood, place of work, or at a location where they may be visiting. CERT members are **NOT** authorized to respond to an emergency that they hear about on the radio, television, or scanner, for example, without being called out by OEM.

CERT Volunteers are only considered self-activated **until** emergency responders arrive on the scene and initiate the Incident Management System (IMS). Once IMS is initiated, CERT Volunteers will take direction from the Incident Commander (IC) or their designate. The decision to deactivate the CERT Volunteer will be made by the IC or designate.

During a self-activation, CERT Volunteers will follow IMS as defined and outlined in the CERT training. The first CERT Volunteer on the scene is the Leader until such time as other volunteers arrive and a new leader is chosen/or the pre-determined leader arrives.

The Team Leader will contact OEM program staff to report the activation. The need and frequency of continued status reports will be determined by OEM at that time. The communication method for transmitting these reports will be determined at the time by the nature, extent and severity of the emergency or disaster event.

2. **Directed Activation** - CERT Volunteers may be directed to respond to an emergency or disaster scene by OEM staff.

A directed activation is initiated by a formal request made to OEM’s Duty Officer or through the Burnet County Emergency Operation Center (EOC), if it has been

activated. The OEM Duty Officer or designated EOC representative will contact the authorized OEM program staff who will initiate the CERT team call-out procedure.

During a directed activation, OEM program staff will contact CERT members by email, telephone or through the Emergency Notification System (ENS). Volunteers will be given further instructions at that time. If required, Team Leaders will be chosen by OEM. At the emergency scene, the Team Leader will take direction from the IC or their designate under the IMS plan initiated at the scene.

The Team Leader will contact OEM program staff or the EOC team leader when they arrive on the scene and will provide reports to OEM or the EOC team leader. The communication method and intervals for transmitting these reports will be determined at the time by the nature, extent and severity of the emergency or disaster event. If needed, the Team Leader can designate a Communications Specialist on the scene to communicate thereafter with OEM to give status reports on team activities.

Team Leaders may not stand down unless requested to do so by the IC, OEM staff or EOC Team Leader. If the Team Leader must leave the scene, OEM staff or an EOC Team Leader will designate a new Team Leader. Do not switch roles during activation without prior authorization.

- 3. Non-emergency Activation** - Public safety organizations can request assistance from CERT Volunteers for non-emergency public safety activities approved by OEM. Requests for non-emergency activation are made to the OEM via telephone, fax, email, interoffice mail, or U.S. postal service.

Examples of non-emergency activation requests include distribution of hazard awareness and disaster preparedness educational material through door-to-door delivery, staffing of information booths at community events and delivering presentations to clubs, associations and at schools.

CERT Volunteers are notified of non-emergency activation requests by telephone, email, individual email, or a posting on OEM's website.

### Contact Numbers

Sheriff's Office 24-hour Duty Officer	<b>512-756-8080 (Dispatch)</b>
OEM 24-hour Number	<b>512-750-0507 (Cell) or 512-756-8591 (Other)</b>