Standard Operating Guidelines

I. OVERVIEW AND MISSION

A. PURPOSE

The Prepared Homestead Community Emergency Response Team (otherwise known as the Texas County Emergency Response Team, TCERT) is part of the national FEMA CERT program in an effort to incorporate and utilize volunteers in the community. CERT is endorsed by the President and the Department of Homeland Security. TCERT members are trained in basic response techniques in order to assist local citizens and first responders in disaster or emergency situations.

The purpose of the TCERT Concept of Operations Plan and Standard Operating Guidelines is to:

1. Outline the concept of operations organization.
2. Specify procedures for TCERT activation.
3. Establish TCERT training and equipment requirements.
4. Define TCERT team functions, capabilities, and limitations.

This helps to insure an organized and efficient response to a large-scale emergency or disaster occurring in Texas County Missouri. .

B. MISSION

The mission of the CERT program is to rapidly respond as a team to assist local responders, communities, private agencies and/or state and federal agencies in a large-scale emergency or disaster.

TCERT teams are designed to support first responders or Emergency Operations Center support functions.

TCERT Mission Statement:

TO PROVIDE AREA RESIDENTS AND FIRST RESPONDERS A QUALITY RESOURCE FOR SAFETY EDUCATION, HAZARD MITIGATION, EMERGENCY RESPONSE ASSISTANCE, AND OTHER VOLUNTEER EFFORTS.

C. GOALS

The goals of TCERT are:

1. To do the greatest good for the greatest amount of people.
2. To maintain team readiness through ongoing training and meetings.
3. To gain and maintain acknowledgement and respect from area first responders and residents.
4. To maintain professionalism in all areas within the scope of the program.
5. To focus great effort in maintaining the safety, in ordered importance, of ourselves, team members, and all other victims or rescuers.

D. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of TCERT are to establish and maintain teams of qualified and trained individuals who can execute the following:

1. Augment the local emergency services and emergency management officials with trained individuals.
2. Assist law enforcement or local fire departments functions including traffic direction and security.
3. Assist in victim triage and rescue.
4. Assist with sheltering, mass feeding and other support function staffing.
5. Integrate operations with other CERT teams as directed by other first responders.
6. Provide communications capability with individual team members and coordinate communications with other CERT teams.

E. BASIC MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBILITY

1. Appropriate Assignments. The basic intent in staffing the TCERT is the premise: "There is a job for everyone". This premise takes into consideration that   some of the volunteers may be young or old, physically fit or disabled, highly educated or poorly educated, and so forth. The key to success in staffing TCERT is to assign jobs appropriate to the individual.
2. Age. Inherent to TCERT operations in a disaster environment are risks to the health and safety of TCERT team members. Therefore, if accepted, TCERT team members under the age of 18 must provide appropriate parental permission and supervision. These members will only be assigned jobs and/or tasks of minimal risk. Similarly, members with advanced age should be assigned tasks appropriate to their physical ability.

3. Gender. There are no barriers to gender in this program.
4. Ethnic Group or Race. There are no barriers to ethnic groups or race.
5. Disability. Many Americans with disabilities are extremely valuable if assigned to positions or duties within the scope of their abilities. Although there may be some physical barriers which people with disabilities may not overcome, not all tasks, duties, or positions subject people to these barriers. Therefore, assignment within capability may add a valuable member to the team that otherwise would have been overlooked or excluded.
6. Religion. There are no barriers to religion in this program.

F. REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP

Potential TCERT Team members should:

1. Available to serve the citizens and communities of Texas County with residents receiving preference.
2. Be able, either physically, mentally (or both physically and mentally) as required, execute any or all competencies taught during basic CERT training.
3. Not be a convicted felon or have a history of criminal convictions that, in the opinion of TCERT would be against the best interest of the communities we serve to appoint said person to TCERT, whereas TCERT members could likely be placed into situations where the occupancy by TCERT members would occur in private dwellings of homes and citizens' personal space.
4. Be of a character that can be trusted under adverse conditions where victims of disaster could be at disadvantage. (TCERT Team members must be trusted to treat victims and their property with highest respect and dignity.)
5. Complete and return the Informed Consent, Waiver and Release Agreement Form.
6. Complete and return the CERT Application Form.

II. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. GENERAL

The TCERT teams are designed to provide assistance to first responders during a long-term incident. The teams are also capable of providing direct support to communities and/or private agencies within the scope of emergency management support functions.

The TCERT teams operate under the sole direction of the Prepared Homestead Emergency Response Team Director/CERT County Coordinator or their designee.

B. OPERATION RESPONSIBILITIES

The TCERT program supports local incident commanders, local emergency responders and other support agencies within the emergency management system.

TCERT teams are neither designed nor intended to serve as initial first responders on a scene but can provide additional resources as "second" responders if the event requires it.

The TCERT enables the Incident Commander to utilize TCERT teams in non-critical functions allowing first responders to be utilized in critical areas.

In a large-scale situation where the first response system is overwhelmed and delayed, TCERT members will provide assistance in their homes, neighborhoods, and local communities until first responders arrive.

III. TEAM IDENTIFICATION

It is essential that TCERT members maintain a professional level in both emergency and non-emergency activations. Team members are issued identification cards for both identification and accountability purposes. When performing TCERT functions, members must display appropriate identification.

A. IDENTIFICATION CARDS

Identification cards will be worn on the outermost garment at all times. If the card is lost it will be the responsibility of the team member to replace it prior to the participation in another event. TCERT members will not be allowed to participate in any activation functions of the program without a proper ID.

B. APPAREL

In emergency situations, members must wear the issued or approved TCERT uniform and safety equipment. Members need to dress for the conditions and should always wear pants and work boots. During non-emergency situations, members need to wear either the issued TCERT vest or other purchased clothing containing the CERT logo that is approved by TCERT. It is the responsibility of the team member to maintain all garments in a presentable manner. Purchased TCERT apparel will not be worn in any inappropriate locations, such as bars. When wearing TCERT apparel, members must maintain a professional demeanor.

IV. TEAM ORGANIZATION

A. TEAM ORGANIZATION AND POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

1. **Team Leader**
   Team Leaders are to be appointed by the TCERT Director/Coordinator or his designee. Instead of directing team members' work, team leaders facilitate team

activities toward goal accomplishment. Team leaders are not ultimately responsible for their team's performance, however, they help their teams plan, learn to solve problems, and work effectively with each other. A team leader should enjoy coaching, working with people, and bringing about improvement through hands-off guidance and leadership.

During large-scale emergencies, TCERT teams become an integral part of the command and control structure upon arrival at a staging area. The command and control staff of the affected jurisdiction must understand the role and training level of TCERT teams when deploying them as a resource. The Team Leader will be the central point of coordination for the teams and will receive information from responsible parties.

The Team Leader will be an individual who has demonstrated through training, knowledge and experience that he/she is capable of leading the team before and during the stressful environment of a large-scale emergency or disaster. This individual will have the capability to manage and seek advice from a diverse group of people and ensure the team has an integrated approach during a critical incident. The Team Leader must possess knowledge of team functions, operations, and safety.

2. **Assistant Team Leaders**
   Assistant Team Leaders provide necessary support for the Team Leader to manage and account for all team members. They follow the direction of the Team Leader and assume the roles he or she assigns to them. They assist Team Leaders in planning and coordination efforts. Assistant Leaders must be able to spontaneously step up to a Team Leader position in cases when the Team Leader is unavailable. This means the Assistant Team Leaders must be familiar with and fluent in all of the Team Leader's responsibilities.

3. **Team Members**

   TCERT is intended to provide a coordinated response for assisting first responders in large-scale emergency situations. Team members will maintain a level of training in order to effectively respond to a situation. Team members work under the direction of the Team Leader and/or Assistant Leaders. They help plan and carry out all team functions. Every team member is responsible for the actions of their team.

4. **Team Assignments**
   When activated for an emergency response, the team assignments will be as follows:
   a. Team Leader. (1)
   b. Assistant Team Leader. (1)
   c. Fire Suppression Team (2)
   d. Search and Rescue Team (2)
   e. Medical Triage Team (2)
   f. Treatment Team (2)

V. TEAM ACTIVATION

A. ACTIVATION

Upon authorization by the TCERT Coordinator members/team(s) will be activated by cell phones or the approved team phone app.

The county Coordinator will activate TCERT if:

A. Requested by a local response agency.
B. Requested by a private response organization.
C. The Office becomes aware of a situation that may warrant the assistance of a CERT team.

B. NOTIFICATION

Different levels of team activation are available depending on the magnitude of the incident and the specific type of incident. The county Coordinator will keep all TCERT members apprised of the notification of a team. The following levels are utilized:

1. **Alert**
   An alert is intended only to inform TCERT teams of the potential for or the occurrence of an event. An alert does not constitute a directive to begin any response.

2. **Mobilization**
   A request for mobilization of a TCERT team is intended to have team members report to a staging area with all of their equipment for possible deployment. When responding to the staging area, ALL traffic laws will be obeyed! The county Coordinator with the approval of the Incident Commander will initiate a response or cancellation of the mobilization.

3. **Deployment**
   The TCERT team upon activation will report to the staging area for deployment. **Individual response to an incident is prohibited** unless authorized by the TCERT Coordinator.

   Deploying TCERT members will bring all necessary equipment and personal necessities for a 48-hour period.

   Activated TCERT members can be utilized to assist with basic scene or support functions including:

   - Basic First Aid

- Triage of Victims
- Extinguishment of small incipient phase fires utilizing makeshift aids or fire extinguishers. (NOTE – No interior firefighting is allowed and TCERT members will not be in a position where smoke inhalation or heat endangers their safety).
- Light Search and Rescue to include cribbing/leveraging and removal of patients from danger.
- Setting up treatment, rehab or similar sectors.
- Maintaining accountability for fellow TCERT members.
- Supervising TCERT sectors or groups.
- Any other operation required to remedy a given scenario that does not directly endanger the TCERT members or move outside of their scope of practice.

C. CANCELLATION

When an alert, mobilization, or deployment order has been issued and subsequent information indicates TCERT assistance is not required, the TCERT Coordinator will issue a notice of cancellation to the Team Leader through the appropriate means. All incident commanders and first responders may remove a CERT member from a scene for any reason as they see fit.

D. SELF DEPLOYMENT/FREELANCING

Team members are not allowed to self deploy to an incident. Deployment will be done as a team. Furthermore, the individual will be removed from the TCERT program immediately.

E. WEAPONS

TCERT members are not permitted to carry or possess any weapons while undertaking activities as a TCERT member unless authorized by the county Coordinator, OEM Director or County Sheriff.

VI. TRAINING AND EXERCISING

A. INTRODUCTION

The TCERT intended to provide additional support resources in non-critical functions during large-scale situations and also provide non-emergency support functions during non-emergency situations. To be prepared to respond, team personnel must maintain a minimal level of training.

B. TRAINING GUIDELINES

The TCERT training program is based on maintaining a skill level to assist in the basic life saving efforts until the first response system is activated and an effective response is initiated. Personnel must also possess the knowledge required to accomplish this effectively without the threat of becoming secondary casualties.

Some examples of the types of training that are necessary will include first aid, triage, rescue, utility shutoff, use of personal protective equipment, and communications.

Due to their mission, TCERT team(s) may respond and operate in several different environments and be responsible for numerous functions. All TCERT members must receive an appropriate level of training necessary for their function.

1. **Basic TCERT training**
   All team members are required to successfully complete and maintain the basic CERT training.
2. **Basic MRC (Medical Reserve Corp) Training**
   All team members will be given the opportunity to attend MRC training.
3. **Incident Command Training**
   All team members must attend Incident Command training to be eligible for field response.

VII. EQUIPMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

Equipping a TCERT member is a significant commitment. Properly selected and maintained equipment is essential to insure the team is capable of responding to a major event.

B. PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Each CERT member may be issued equipment that he/she is responsible for. This equipment must be properly maintained and readily available for response to a situation. Members must bring equipment to the staging area.

The equipment provided includes but not limited to:

TO BE DETERMINED

C. EQUIPMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Team leaders will inventory each member's equipment bag twice per year and report to the TCERT coordinator. If issues equipment is missing or damaged, the county coordinator will address the issue with the member.

If the member leaves the team, the issued equipment will be returned to the TCERT coordinator within two weeks of notification. Unreturned equipment will be replaced at the previous member's expense.

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

A pre-defined and effective communications strategy for the TCERT program is required to support the mission and goals of the program. This section supports:

- Overall communications plan
- Communication procedures for alerting, mobilizing and deploying teams
- Communications between the EOC, county 911 and/or Incident Commander and TCERT teams
- Communication between members and teams at the incident site
- Communications terminology
- General communications procedures
- Reporting

B. AVAILABLE COMMUNICATIONS

The following equipment and communication system resources are capable of being utilized for CERT communications.

1. Commercial telephone and fax service is typically maintained by private companies and work under normal conditions. Outages may occur when infrastructure has been impacted or when the services are experiencing unusually heavy demand.
2. In-house portable radio.
3. County 911 radio system.

C. COMMUNICATIONS TERMINOLOGY

1. Using common terminology and terms when communicating is essential using a common system. This system would utilize clear text and common language in both communications and call signs in order to:
    a. Function according to Incident Command Standards
    b. Facilitate communication of information at an incident scene
    c. Ease identification of different responsibilities
    d. Identify units by function and/or geographic assignment
    e. Identify all units in clear text
2. The following rules of communication will apply to TCERT team operations:
    a. The use of "10" codes will not be used
    b. Plain text will be used at all times

c. Conversations should be clear, concise and short to minimize tying up the radio.
d. The words "CODE RED" should be announced over the radio when scene is no longer under control or personnel are in immediate danger.
3. It is important when initiating a conversation on a radio system to first identify the unit being called, by the unit calling.
4. The person initiating a conversation is responsible for announcing "clear" when he/she is through communicating on the radio. This will let others know that the conversation is completed, and they may use the radio.

D. GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURES

Each team member will operate only on the operational channel assigned at the incident.

IX. GROUNDS FOR REMOVAL

All TCERT members are subject to dismissal from the program for any reason as appropriated by the TCERT coordinator. Some examples of actions that could result in removal from the

TCERT program are:

- Self-deployment to an incident or scene
- Unauthorized use of TCERT signage or logos.
- Unprofessional or aggressive behavior toward other TCERT members, residents, first responders, or other authorities.
- Failure to follow the direction of authorities.
- Being found guilty of crime by a judge or jury.

After a member has been removed, he or she must return all equipment provided by the TCERT program within two weeks. This person will be charged for non-returned items.

XI. CONCLUSION

The TCERT program is a very valuable resource to Texas County when operating in its intended functions. These Standard Operating Guidelines help insure proper orientation of the program and its members. Each member is responsible for understanding and following these guidelines.

Approved by:

TCERT County Coordinator

Travis Maddox, 03/25/2025