



Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program Guide

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Section 1: Introduction

Purpose

The *Community Emergency Response Team Program Guide* provides an overview of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program and explains the requirements each CERT Program must meet to remain officially recognized.

Scope and Applicability

This guide establishes common terminology and approach to the structure of the CERT Program. This guide explains its benefits to the community they serve, and to outline responsibilities and requirements for CERT Programs, Program Managers, and Sponsoring Organizations.

- **Section 2: The CERT Program** provides an overview of the CERT Program, including the typical organizational structure of a CERT Program.
- **Section 3: Establishing a CERT Program** identifies high-level steps an individual may take to create an officially recognized CERT Program.
- **Section 4: Sponsor Responsibilities** delineates the steps Sponsoring Organizations need to take to ensure success for the CERT Program.
- **Section 5: CERT Program Requirements** discusses national requirements placed upon CERT Programs to remain officially recognized.
- **Sections 6: CERT Training** and **Section 7: CERT Organizations** describe the main aspects of a CERT Program—CERT training and teams—and how these aspects benefit the community.
- **Section 8: CERT Legal Information** provides a high-level overview of the legal aspects of the program, including the protection of CERT personnel and the use of the CERT logo.

Document Management and Maintenance

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Section 2: The CERT Program

FEMA established the National CERT Program to address preparedness and response capabilities within communities throughout the nation. The program educates people about preparedness for hazards that may impact their area and basic disaster response skills such as fire safety, light search and rescue, and team organization. Using skills learned in classroom training and drills and exercises, CERT volunteers can help their community prepare for disasters and assist members of the community immediately after a disaster before first responders arrive on the scene.

Started in the aftermath of the 1985 Mexico City Earthquake, the CERT Program has grown in geographic location and capability. The Los Angeles Fire Department piloted the first-ever CERT Program in 1986 for earthquake response. From there, the program spread to other jurisdictions, including San Francisco, CA, and Portland, OR, and was adapted to include hurricane response. Because the program showed it could be adapted to meet the needs of different hazards, the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) at FEMA developed training for CERT volunteers in 1993. CERT has since become a national program that communities may take part in to prepare for and respond to the hazards they face.

Types of CERT Programs

Communities who elect to develop CERT may identify their program in a way that matches their location and audience. A community may identify their CERT Program or Teams as Community, Workplace, Campus, or Teen. Each of these descriptors is a useful way of immediately describing the type of CERT Program to external entities and potential participants.

Table 1 and 2 describe the various types of CERT Programs.

Although CERT Programs may identify as specific types, they do not fundamentally differ from one another. Each program must meet the same basic requirements and follow the same rules. The main idea behind the CERT Program—train individuals of the community to prepare for and respond to emergencies—also does not change. The differences among the varying types of programs remain contained in the programs' setting, audience, and response area. For additional information on CERT Program requirements, please refer to Section 4: Sponsor Responsibilities and Section 5: CERT Program Requirements.



CERT Program Commonalities

Though CERT programs may identify as different types of programs, they all still share the same requirements, rules, regulations, and common goal of training individuals in their community to prepare for and respond to emergencies.

Table 1: Types of CERT Traditional Programs

Traditional Community CERT Program	Description of the CERT Program
Train and Retain	The traditional local CERT Program sets the precedent for all other CERT Programs. The program trains volunteers to participate in durable teams for disaster preparedness and response.
Training Only	The program regularly trains community members in CERT skills but does not maintain teams for response.

Table 2: Types of Specialized CERT Programs

Specialized CERT Program	Description of the CERT Program
Workplace CERT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Workplace CERT Program equips employees with skills that enable them to react and effectively respond to an emergency event. ▪ The program is expected to generally limit its activities to the workplace property. ▪ Programs may conduct activities off workplace property with appropriate coordination, supervision, and permission.
Campus CERT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Campus CERT Program supports and enhances existing emergency management capabilities by participating in efforts to increase the preparedness and resilience of the college or university campus community. ▪ The program is expected to generally limit its activities to the college or university campus property. ▪ Programs may conduct activities off the college or university campus with appropriate coordination, supervision, and permission.
Teen CERT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Teen CERT Program aims to train students in emergency preparedness and basic response to ensure that they have the skills needed to protect themselves and assist others in the event of an emergency. This program can also offer students exposure to careers in emergency management or as first responders. ▪ The program is expected to generally limit its activities to the school property. ▪ Programs may conduct activities off school grounds with appropriate coordination, supervision, and permission.

CERT Program Overview

Each CERT Program contains a training component and, if desired, teams for actual response and other activities. At its most basic level, the purpose of the CERT Program is to train and organize community members so they may prepare for and respond to emergencies. The CERT Program offers training to individuals so they may learn skills to meet the needs of their community in the case of an emergency. CERTs can teach community members about preparedness and assist with mitigating potential hazards in their community. CERTs can also augment emergency management and response capabilities by assisting first responders during and after an emergency.

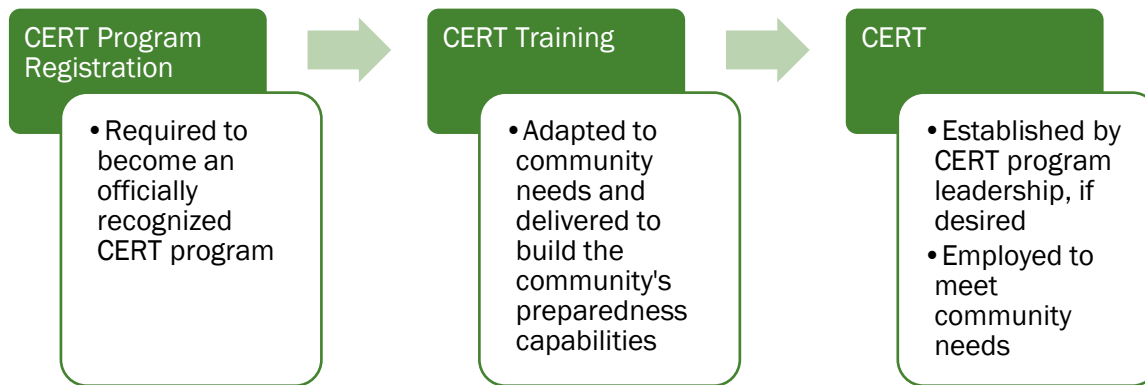


Figure 1: CERT Program Process Overview

Organization of a CERT Program

This section refers to organization for program management purposes. For program organization during exercises and mobilization, see the CERT Basic Training and Supplemental Materials available at https://community.fema.gov/PreparednessCommunity/s/welcome-to-cert?language=en_US.

The structure of each CERT Program may vary due to the flexibility the National CERT Program allows for local program setup. The CERT Program should ensure its structure meets the needs of its community and is appropriate for the resources the program has available. To provide for the needs of the program and the community, the program may have an internal structure for its program leadership and a hierarchy of its components—CERT training and component CERTs.

A CERT Program should build its leadership structure to accomplish all administrative tasks required to keep the program running efficiently and meet FEMA requirements, as well as state or local rules and regulations.

A CERT Program may have multiple components. The program must deliver CERT Basic Training at least once per year; therefore, CERT training automatically exists as one component of the program. The Program Manager works with their training component to ensure there are enough instructors and participants to meet program requirements. A CERT Program may also create teams. Based on

the location and number of people who want to join CERT, a CERT Program may have one or several teams, even many types of CERTs—including Community, Workplace, Campus, and Teen. A CERT may focus solely on implementing CERT training.



Local Emergency Management and the CERT Program

Local emergency management plays an integral role in the life of a CERT Program. An emergency management agency may sponsor a CERT Program. The agencies can be a source of instructors for CERT training courses. Emergency management agencies also help carve out roles for a CERT.

To illustrate how a program may have one or more teams of different types, consider this example. If the City of Newville wants to establish a CERT Program, or already has a program, it may offer CERT Basic Training in one location, and maintain CERTs for response in each ward, borough, or neighborhood of the city. Each of the CERTs can have unique leadership structures and even Sponsoring Organization. If a high school within the City of Newville has or would like to establish a CERT, a Teen CERT could be an independent program sponsored by the school. Or as another option, the school and city could establish the Teen CERT as a part of the overall city program. For program organization during exercises and mobilization, see the CERT Basic Training and Supplemental Materials available at https://community.fema.gov/PreparednessCommunity/s/welcome-to-cert?language=en_US.

This arrangement could apply to a city, county, Fire Protection District, or even group of cities and counties where one government body is the managing and coordinating organization for area CERTs.

The Program Manager works with CERT Team Leaders to ensure the goal of the team aligns with the program goal(s) and to facilitate coordination between the team and local emergency managers or first responders.

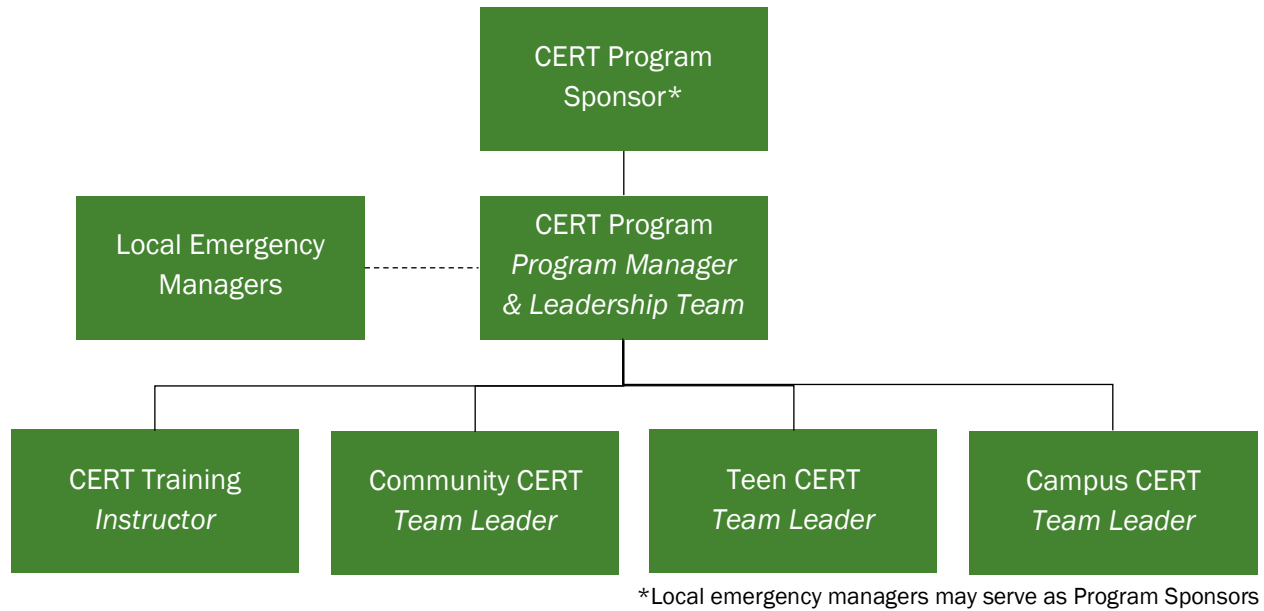


Figure 2: Example of a CERT Program Hierarchy

Section 3: Establishing a CERT Program

To establish a CERT Program, pioneering individuals should take multiple planning steps, including developing program goals and interacting with pertinent stakeholders within the community. It is important to use local officials as an asset throughout the process; their sponsorship is not only required for CERT registration and success of the program, but they have a vested interest in the safety and preparedness of the community as well. The steps to establish a CERT Program are outlined in the *Starting a CERT* publication available at https://community.fema.gov/PreparednessCommunity/s/welcome-to-cert?language=en_US.

Becoming an Officially Recognized CERT Program

The National CERT Program has laid out an eight-step process that individuals seeking to start a CERT Program in their community should execute. Individuals may adapt these steps to their local needs.

1. Identify a Sponsoring Organization and build partnerships
2. Develop a set of goals and objectives
3. Secure resources
4. Develop a training plan
5. Market and recruit CERT participants
6. Deliver CERT training
7. Establish a CERT
8. Track and evaluate your program

Individuals considering establishing a CERT Program should conduct research to see if a CERT Program already exists in their community. If one exists, those trying to establish the CERT Program should talk with the Program Manager and determine if they should create a CERT as a component of the program or establish another stand-alone program. The individuals may identify their team as a Community, Workplace, Campus, or Teen CERT.

Once a CERT Program has identified a Program Manager and their Sponsoring Organization point of contact, the Program Manager should register their CERT Program to become officially recognized. The program must register online at the FEMA registration portal at <https://community.fema.gov/register>.

The Program Manager and the Sponsoring Organization point of contact should read this Program Guide and *Starting a CERT* prior to registering. All CERT Programs must follow the same basic requirement for program registration using the online portal.

The CERT State Coordinator reviews all program applications. The Program Manager should work with their Sponsoring Organization to identify and reach out to their CERT State Coordinator if they have any questions related to registering.

For more information on starting a CERT Program, including identifying a sponsor and funding, refer to *Starting a CERT: Guidelines and Recommendations* at ready.gov/cert. Each type of CERT Program has its own respective guide.



Approving CERT Program Registration

When deciding whether to approve an application from a prospective CERT program, State CERT Coordinators consider whether the sponsoring agency can supply the personnel and resources to support the program. This includes the ability to support annual training and drills.

Section 4: Sponsoring Organizations and the CERT State Coordinator

The Sponsoring Organization helps to increase their community's preparedness by supporting a CERT Program. Sponsoring Organizations support many CERT Program functions and add to the CERT Program's credibility.

Responsibilities of a CERT Sponsoring Organization

CERT Sponsoring Organizations have many responsibilities that help their associated CERT Programs stay active and engaged, helping the program meet FEMA's requirements and serve their communities. Sponsors must take an active role in the training component of the program, at the very least by supervising the quality of instruction and exercises being delivered. Sponsors should make sure that all volunteers and instructors meet training standards. They should assist with credentialing instructors and volunteers by helping with recruitment, screening, background checks (if required), acceptance, supervision, termination of volunteers, and ensuring that personnel information is kept confidential. It is recommended that CERT sponsors help develop supplemental training materials to address local hazards, potential volunteer personnel needs, and unique events.

Sponsors should also take part in shaping and monitoring CERTs. They should make sure that CERT volunteers take part in drills and exercises, such as those that allow volunteers to train with full-time responders from the sponsor. Sponsors handle the activation, staging, deployment, and operational activities of their teams. They must develop policies, procedures, and documentation practices to support these activities. CERT Sponsoring organizations should assist their programs with raising funds, this could include allowing various fundraises by the program itself, providing funds or facilities, and assisting in applying for grants.

Sponsoring a CERT Program

Individuals or non-governmental groups within communities need to identify a CERT Sponsoring Organization to establish a CERT Program. A Sponsoring Organization helps support many CERT Program functions and adds to its credibility. The following organizations may provide sponsorship for a CERT Program:

- State, regional, local, territorial, commonwealth, unincorporated or tribal government-operated public safety agencies, including those responsible for law enforcement, fire suppression, and emergency medical services;
- State, regional, local, tribal, or territorial emergency management agencies;
- Departments under the authority of local, municipal, or tribal governments, including health departments, fire protection districts, regional planning districts, and city councils. Non-emergency service agencies and offices may sponsor CERT Programs, but must enable coordination with emergency services for training, mobilization, and supervision as needed; and

- Elected officials or their offices and other government organizations, if they ensure the program can interface with emergency service organizations.

Frequently, one of the above governmental organizations is the entity seeking to organize a CERT Program. In this case, the Program Manager and Sponsoring Organization point of contact may be the same person.

Sponsoring Organization Point of Contact

While the Sponsoring Organization may be the office of the mayor, fire department, or other government body, it is not typical that the mayor or fire chief is the point of contact (POC) for the CERT Program Manager. The Sponsoring Organization must provide a POC for the Program Manager, and the FEMA CERT Program listing. This POC:

- Should be the interface for the Program Manager with the Sponsoring Organization;
- Assists the Program Manager with integrating CERT into operations;
- Helps coordinate and provide resources and facilities;
- Keeps the Sponsoring Organization officer (e.g., mayor, chief) informed about CERT Program status; and
- Communicates with State CERT Coordinator and other state, local, tribal, territorial officers as needed (i.e., State Training Officer).

State Coordinator

Each state or territory should have a person or persons acting to support and coordinate CERT within their state. This support includes assisting local programs and sponsors in resolving questions of credentialing, liability training (see Section 8), interoperability, and other state requirements for volunteers and disaster workers. The State Coordinator is an essential part of CERT success and should assist CERTs and Sponsors in applying for funding, including applying for grants. Each State Coordinator may review, edit, and approve or disapprove CERT Program listings for their state in FEMA's CERT Registration Site.

State Coordinators play a vital role in the approval and maintenance of CERT Programs and are the final authority in each state or territory to approve CERT Programs. They should use the following process to review and approve or disapprove CERT Programs:

1. Upon receiving notification of an application, the State Coordinator should review the application.
2. The State Coordinator contacts the Sponsoring Organization POC listed in the application to ensure that the prospective Sponsoring Organization is aware of the program application, that the basic CERT program requirements are met, and to confirm the duties and responsibilities of a Sponsoring Organization.
3. The Coordinator contacts the prospective CERT Program manager and ensures the program is aware of the program requirements and the duties and responsibilities of the Program Manager.

4. If satisfied that both Program and Sponsoring Organization are ready and able to undertake the operation of a successful CERT Program in accordance with FEMA, state, and local requirements, the State Coordinator approves the program listing in the system, which will then be accepted by FEMA.

State Coordinators should help CERTs maintain their programs successfully and monitor those assigned programs. State Coordinators have system rights to approve, deny, review, edit, and delete program listings within their respective states or territories.

State coordinators are usually part of a state office of emergency management, in the section that works with volunteers.

Tribal Nation Programs

CERT Programs operated by Tribal Nations may choose to operate in coordination with, and as part of, the state or territory in which their borders lie, or may operate independently of those states or territories at their sole discretion. In such cases, FEMA regional or headquarters staff will act as the program approval authority within the system.

Section 5: CERT Program Requirements

To maintain official recognition, a CERT Program must meet all requirements as identified by the National CERT Program. These requirements ensure that the local programs remain active and keep up to date with new training. A CERT Sponsoring Organization will assist its associated CERT Program in meeting program requirements by carrying out responsibilities that help the program continue its mission.

Basic Requirements of the Program

Maintaining official recognition as a registered CERT Program requires the program to meet certain requirements throughout the lifetime of the program. All CERT Programs have the same three basic requirements they must meet. **Table** outlines the requirements of the CERT Program.

Table 3: Requirements of the CERT Program

Requirement	Requirement Description
Drills and Exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take part in a drill or exercise once per year
CERT Basic Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver CERT Basic Training once per year, including the culminating exercise
Programmatic Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the online CERT Annual Certification once per year in the FEMA CERT Registration Site: https://community.fema.gov/PreparednessCommunity/s/welcome-to-cert Verify Program Manager and sponsor information once per year in the portal Update team registration information once per year in the portal

Failure to Comply with CERT Program Requirements

Violations of these requirements will result in the notification to the State CERT Coordinator and the possible removal of a program from the National CERT Registry. CERT Program Managers should reach out to both the State CERT Coordinator and their Sponsoring Organization to create a plan that will allow them to continue their program if it is determined that they may fail to comply with one of the above requirements.

Section 6: CERT Training

CERT training is essential to the development of a CERT Program and helps build a prepared community. The CERT Program is first and foremost a program that educates local communities on preparedness and response to the local hazards they may face. CERT training goes beyond basic lectures, allowing volunteers to put their preparedness to the test during training exercises within their community.

CERT Training and the Community

CERT training not only benefits those who directly volunteer in the program but also individuals in the community. Participants learn lifesaving skills, fulfill community service requirements, give back to the community, develop leadership skills, and help make their community safer. The training supports individual awareness of what to do before, during, and after an emergency. It provides skills and organization for individuals to safely assist in the immediate aftermath of a disaster when professional responders may be delayed or limited.

CERT Basic Training Standards

Local CERT Program leadership, States, and Sponsoring Organizations are jointly responsible for ensuring that CERT Basic Training is delivered to volunteers in a way that achieves the objectives identified in the CERT Basic Training Instructor Guide, which is available for download at ready.gov/cert. Many CERT trainers are credentialed through state-sponsored deliveries of CERT Train the Trainer. FEMA sets nationwide minimum curriculum standards.

State Coordinators supervise the delivery of CERT Basic Training within their state, ensuring that it is delivered to those standards, and are responsible for supervising local deliveries in coordination with sponsoring organizations. State Coordinators may authorize blended learning or other non-traditional delivery methods for CERT Basic Training as well as traditional classroom-based deliveries within their state, as long as the training achieves all objectives identified in CERT Basic Training. It must include live completion of all hands-on skills, as well as participation in a culminating exercise under the supervision of the program and sponsoring organization. Completion of the FEMA independent study course, IS-317: Introduction to CERT, and IS-315: CERT and the Incident Command System are not acceptable substitutes for CERT Basic Training or a portion of it.

CERT Training

The National CERT Program developed a standard curriculum for CERT Programs to use when delivering training. The curriculum consists of CERT Basic Training, CERT Program Manager, and CERT Train the Trainer. All volunteers who want to participate in a CERT Program should take CERT Basic Training. Any prospective or current Program Manager should take the CERT Program Manager course. Lastly, individuals who want to become a CERT instructor must take CERT Train the Trainer.

Table describes the purpose of each training course in the CERT curriculum.

Table 4: CERT Training Courses

CERT Training Course	Training Course Description
CERT Basic Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This foundational course is delivered to all CERT Volunteers nationwide.
E/L/G/K0427: CERT Program Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This course focuses on teaching individuals to effectively manage CERT Programs.
E/L/G/K0428: CERT Train the Trainer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This course focuses on teaching individuals how to facilitate the CERT Basic Training course.
E0429: CERT Leaders Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This course combines CERT Train the Trainer and CERT Program Manager into a single unified course, covering the same materials as Train the Trainer and Program Manager, delivered at the Emergency Management Institute only. ▪ Recommended for all CERT Leaders who might take Train the Trainer or Program Manager courses.
IS-317: Introduction to CERT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This independent study course, available at https://training.fema.gov, introduces all audiences to the Community Emergency Response Team Program. It provides a basic orientation to CERT, including how CERTs can serve communities, and what CERT volunteers may be called upon to do when activated.
IS-315: CERT and the Incident Command System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This independent study course, available at https://training.fema.gov, provides a basic guide to utilizing CERT and volunteers within the framework of ICS. ▪ Recommended for all CERT Leaders, as well as responders and emergency managers who utilize CERTs and other volunteers in training or response. ▪ Prerequisite: IS-100, The Incident Command System, available at https://training.fema.gov.

The National CERT Program acknowledges that local CERT Programs have specific community needs and allows programs to tailor the training to reflect those needs. When CERT Programs establish their program, they should devise a training plan that includes ways to tailor the training. CERT Basic training must be taught in full. However, instructors may tailor activities within the training course to reflect hazards that are relevant to the participants' community. Instructors may also add anecdotes to the training to enhance the relatability of the content for participants.

If necessary, Program Managers or Team Leaders may add supplemental materials as a mandatory aspect of their training curriculum that individuals must complete to join the CERT Program or a team. Acceptable supplementary materials include those provided by FEMA; the National CERT Program; federal, state, and local officials, or other reputable sources such as the American Red Cross or American Heart Association. Please note that CERT Programs are not authorized to remove components from the CERT Basic Training Course.



Tailoring CERT Training

It is allowable to include additional material in CERT Basic Training and the training curriculum when it is from reputable sources, such as, but not limited to:

- Federal, state, and local emergency management, emergency response, or health agencies
- Reputable health education and disaster relief organizations, such as the American Heart Association and the American Red Cross
- Non-profit organizations and professional associations in good standing, such as the American Public Power Association, Society for Disaster Medicine and Public Health, and the American Psychiatric Association
- Employees of the sponsoring agency with expertise related to the supplemental materials, such as fire department officials developing lesson plans on fire suppression.

Section 7: CERT Organizations

As mentioned in Section 2, the structure of each CERT Program may vary to ensure it meets the needs of its community and is appropriate for the resources the program has available. A community may have multiple CERTs, including a large community CERT and more specific Campus, Workplace, and Teen CERTs. Each of these component CERTs focus on the preparedness needs of their unique audience, which can make consistent training difficult. By organizing all the CERTs into one CERT Program, it enables the CERT Program to focus training efforts in a comprehensive and targeted fashion.

CERT Program Manager

All CERT Programs must have a Program Manager. The CERT Program Manager maintains the program listing and takes the CERT Annual Certification. The Program Manager is generally responsible for day-to-day operations. The Program Manager interacts with the program's components, Sponsoring Organization, and local emergency managers to make the program run effectively. This position ensures the CERT Sponsoring Organization has awareness of the direction of the program and may provide input. The Program Manager also works with local emergency managers to identify potential instructors for CERT training and determine how the CERT Program, and component CERTs can benefit the community and build local response capacity. The program may establish bylaws that identify a leadership hierarchy within the program (e.g., president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer).

Teams in the CERT Program

A CERT is a component of a larger CERT Program. The CERT Program has the flexibility to adjust the team to align with the local community's needs. A CERT may consist of administrative personnel, including the Program Manager working to efficiently operate the program. The team may also contain volunteers who work with the community on preparedness and response efforts.

It is important to note that not every CERT Program will have a team if for example they only train community members, there is no need for a response team. In some instances, a CERT Program may have multiple teams. Not every CERT Program may desire to create teams. Program leadership and the Program Manager should determine if the program needs a team and if they have the resources to establish one. Refer to the example provided in Section 2.



Recruiting Volunteers for a CERT

If the CERT program decides to establish a team, it needs to recruit volunteers. A good way to recruit personnel into a CERT is by approaching participants who recently completed CERT Basic Training. Participants are typically eager to use the skills they learned during training and may envision joining a CERT as an outlet.

CERTs and the Community

A CERT can be an asset to the community in both emergency and non-emergency situations. The team may act as first responders when called upon, or they may focus on helping community members prepare for an emergency. A team's mission is adaptable to community needs. The CERT Program will need to work with the team as well as local emergency managers to determine its mission and how the team can best benefit the community.

Preparedness, Training, and Volunteering

A CERT may take part as an active and vital part of its community's preparedness capability. Teams can help community members prepare for emergencies, train individuals on specific preparedness actions, and volunteer their services to assist local emergency management agencies.



Example of CERT Actions

Preparedness Actions: Installing fire alarms for low-income residents or identifying potential hazards for neighborhood.

Training: Conducting outreach to residents and advertising CERT Basic Training or providing presentation on emergency preparedness to community groups.

Volunteer Activities: Managing traffic at a parade or staffing the medical aid booth at a fair.

Responding to Emergencies

CERT volunteers may help supplement response agencies' staff. For instance, CERT volunteers may help with emergency shelter operations, volunteer management centers, and disaster assessments. Assisting first responders during and after disasters may help relieve some of the stress exerted on emergency systems. In certain circumstances, CERT volunteers may be the first to arrive on scene, in such cases as friends and neighbors, and conduct basic disaster response operations until professional first responders arrive. CERT volunteers can and should act within the scope of their training as Good Samaritans when situations arise in the course of daily life but are prohibited from self-deploying to emergencies. Only Sponsoring Organizations shall deploy CERTs.



Operating the CERT Within Designated Boundaries

The Program Manager and Team Leader should always meet with local emergency managers to discuss how the team may assist first responders during and after emergencies before they execute their mission. CERT volunteers learn a variety of skills, but they are not professional responders and should not act beyond their training. CERT volunteers' safety should always be the first priority.

CERTs must rely on their Sponsoring Organization and local emergency management agencies to deploy. CERTs must also work with the Sponsoring Organization and local emergency agencies to operate outside of their intended setting. Teen, Campus, and Workplace CERTs are usually expected to work within their respective properties but with specific agreements that may be activated to work with neighboring communities.

Credentialing of Volunteers

CERT Sponsoring Organizations and State CERT Coordinators may authorize or require credentialing and background checks of CERT volunteers in accordance with state or local laws and policy. CERT Sponsoring Organizations and State Coordinators must reasonably assist programs and volunteers with completion of credentialing and background checks if required. FEMA does not credential or complete background checks on volunteers and does not establish a uniform standard for CERT volunteers. FEMA does not track local credentials, training events, Basic Training Certificates, or other local documents. FEMA only maintains graduation records of FEMA-sponsored training delivered through the Emergency Management Institute. You may request your training records by visiting <https://training.fema.gov>. FEMA does not track state or locally delivered Train the Trainer or Program Manager courses.

CERT in the National Qualification System

Three CERT positions (CERT Team Leader, CERT Section Chief, and CERT Volunteer) have been added to the National Qualification System (NQS). NQS supplements the Resource Management component of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) by establishing guidance and tools to assist stakeholders in developing processes for qualifying, certifying, and credentialing deployable emergency personnel. These three positions each have a Job Task Position Qualifications (JTPQs) and Position Task Book (PTB) that establish the baseline criteria to be considered a deployable resource in NQS. NQS does not replace existing personnel qualification and certification systems and is only applicable to CERTs that want to be part of NQS. More information on NQS and the CERT JTPQs and PTBs can be found by visiting www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/nims/components#nqs.

Section 8: CERT Legal Information

CERT Programs have an innate liability perception that may act as a barrier to CERT formation; however, programs can take steps to reduce liability. The Program Manager can work with their internal team, sponsors, and community leaders to limit liability for those in the program, CERT training, and CERTs.

Reducing Liability in the CERT Program

All CERT Programs share the potential to offer substantial benefits to their Sponsoring Organizations, their communities, and their volunteers. As with any activity, however, there is risk. Although not common in CERT Program activities, bodily injuries, illnesses, property damage, and other harmful events can result in adverse consequences for the sponsoring agency or organization, the CERT, or the CERT volunteer, trainers, leaders, and affiliates. CERT Programs can best address liability protection by adopting risk management procedures that include, but are not limited to, using the protection provided by the law and by available insurance.

Outside of the realm of legal and insurance protection, CERTs should follow these five steps to managing risk in their program and reduce liabilities:

1. Get leadership support
2. Gather information
3. Identify and assess risk
4. Adopt strategies to manage risk
5. Maintain the momentum

Workplace, Campus, and Teen CERT Programs should consult with their legal counsel to explore ways to reduce risk and liability. The programs should think through potential risks and liability considerations and how they can address them.

A CERT Program should also think about ways to reduce liability in CERT training, drills and exercises, and on CERTs. Again, if the program has legal counsel, they should seek guidance on how to reduce risk and how to address liability issues.

CERT Training	CERT Drills and Exercises	CERT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have all training participants sign waivers/releases of liability.• Ensure that instructors are properly credentialed for the training courses they facilitate.• Set training standards and safety requirements for training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a pre-exercise briefing that includes the objectives.• Treat all drills, functional exercises, and full-scale exercises as the real thing.• Stress teamwork, safety equipment, and the use of the buddy system.• Intervene immediately if an unsafe act occurs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop rules for activation.• Require that injuries and follow-up care related to activation are reported and documented.• Check all equipment to make sure it is in good working order.

Figure 3: Example of Ways to Reduce Risk

For more information on reducing liability in the CERT Program, please refer to the [CERT Liability Guide: A Risk Management Overview for Local CERT Programs](#). Program Sponsoring Organizations and State Coordinators must work together to provide solutions to insurance and liability issues for the CERT Programs within their jurisdictions. These questions cannot typically be solved at the program level and can frustrate local sponsors. Insurance and liability issues have been effectively addressed where state, local, tribal, and territorial governments work together to provide solutions for programs and Sponsoring Organizations.

Legal Protection for CERT Volunteers

Specific types of laws provide liability protection to volunteers in CERTs that assist in emergencies. Protection under these laws varies and follow specific criteria described in the state's statute:

- **Good Samaritan laws:** These laws are specifically designed to protect people from punishment if their actions are determined to be a result of giving reasonable assistance to someone believed to be in immediate danger, injured, or ill in some way.
- **Emergency management and homeland security laws:** State emergency management and homeland security statutes may provide limited immunity from liability to individual CERT volunteers who are working as registered emergency or disaster workers. These laws sometimes provide indemnity as well.

In most states, protective laws have been adopted over many years to address then-current needs. Volunteer liability protection takes two basic forms: immunity (legal exemption of the volunteer from liability) and indemnity (payment of the volunteer's costs arising from a liability claim—such as attorney's fees, judgments, and settlements). CERT Programs should work with their legal counsel, if applicable, to understand which laws offer protection in their localities.

Use of the CERT Logo

CERTs may customize the CERT logo to meet local needs. The use of the logo will strengthen the CERT brand and increase public awareness. More information about logo use may be found in the [CERT Logo Usage Guidelines](#). Guidance on the use of the CERT logo by product manufacturers may be found by contacting FEMA-prepare@fema.dhs.gov.