



# Greenville County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)

Last updated on: 2/01/2019

## Section 1: Introduction

In the event or imminent threat of a major emergency, there is the likelihood that first responders such as fire and rescue, law enforcement, emergency medical services, and emergency management will be overwhelmed. Therefore, Greenville County has established a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program. This training program prepares citizens to assist in their community before, during and after a disaster, in the absence of, or alongside, trained professionals, and perform field operations within the CERT program scope of training.

### PURPOSE:

The following Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) document was developed as a means to properly utilize CERT volunteer resources. These procedures have been developed to provide an understanding of the assistance available to emergency services by CERT members in the community and to provide direction to CERT members as they volunteer assistance within their scope of training. This SOP is a work in progress and will continue to evolve and improve as the policies and procedures it contains are exercised during actual events and trainings.

### MISSION:

The mission of the Greenville County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program is to train citizens in basic emergency procedures for increased disaster resiliency and to encourage them to serve our community by volunteering and teaching others about disaster preparedness. We will also encourage networking and collaboration among members so they can help their communities following a catastrophic incident by assisting and/or augmenting first responder capability during and after an incident.

### BACKGROUND:

The CERT program is divided into two parts:

#### 1) Basic CERT (Awareness Program)

A Basic CERT 20-hour course of instruction is offered to anyone who lives, works, or attends a school or church in Greenville County, in an effort to increase emergency preparedness and provide information on what to do before, during and after an emergency. Individuals who receive CERT Basic training are not able to volunteer with the CERT Program unless additional training steps are taken in the volunteer process, as outlined in this document. The Basic CERT group is comprised of persons who only want to take the course so they can better understand, prepare for, and respond to disasters in their own surroundings. They benefit the community by being

better able to respond should an emergency arise. They cannot act as a representative of the CERT program in any situation.

## 2) Advanced CERT (Volunteer Program)

Advanced CERT members are organized and highly trained citizen volunteers. They are people who want to receive on-going training and, at least periodically, take part in special public service projects and volunteer to assist at community events. They are a valuable asset to Greenville County, and can volunteer to assist Emergency Management with exercises and real-world incidents by offering logistical support and incident rehab services to first responders. In addition to taking the CERT Basic course, they must meet certain ongoing requirements as outlined in this document. They must also follow the established emergency management organizational structure utilizing the following:

- Incident Command System (ICS)
- National Incident Management System (NIMS)

## **Section 2: CERT Advisory Committee**

The Greenville County CERT Advisory Committee will provide specialized knowledge and recommendations for CERT program development and operations and establish volunteer eligibility requirements. Members of the Advisory Committee will be selected by Greenville County Emergency Management.

The Chair position will be held by the CERT Coordinator, who will represent Emergency Management. At a minimum, committee member positions will be held by one representative from each the following disciplines/groups: Law Enforcement, Fire & Rescue, EMS, and CERT Volunteers. Other individuals may be requested to attend meetings and offer input for the consideration of the Committee.

The Advisory Committee will meet at least bi-annually and may create subcommittees and appoint members to these subcommittees.

## **Section 3: Advanced CERT Requirements**

The membership of Advanced CERT shall be volunteers of the community who are over the age of eighteen (18) and have successfully completed the required Federal CERT basic training. Individuals wishing to become Advanced CERT members will be required to fill out an application and return it to the County CERT Coordinator.

- Applicants will be subject to a background and driver's license check.
- Applicants must provide a current, valid state identification card.

- Applicants must agree to abide by the policies laid out in the CERT SOG and Code of Conduct (Appendix 1) and sign the Acknowledgement of Procedures, Release of Liability, and Consent to Background Check (Appendix 2).

Once applicants have passed the preliminary screening, they must complete the Advanced CERT training criteria as determined by the CERT Advisory Committee. This will include but is not limited to:

- FEMA IS-100.b - Introduction to the Incident Command System (online)
- FEMA IS-200.b - ICS for Single Resources & Initial Action Incidents (online)
- FEMA IS-700.a - National Incident Management System (online)
- Current CPR & First Aid Certifications (We can help you obtain these at a reduced cost.)
- Participation in at least two (2) CERT-sponsored trainings each year
- Ability to pass a CERT skills test developed by the CERT Advisory Committee on a yearly or as needed basis

If at any time members fail to meet the established requirements, they will become inactive and unable to volunteer. They will be notified of their change in status and will be required to turn in their CERT uniform and identification card.

However, inactive volunteers may become active again when all requirements are met and approval has been given by Greenville County Emergency Management. Their CERT uniform and identification card will be returned at that time.

#### **Section 4: Volunteer Opportunity Procedures**

All Advanced CERT members will ensure that the CERT Coordinator has, at a minimum, a current phone number and valid email address. Eligible Advanced CERT members will be notified of volunteer opportunities via an email and/or phone call initiated by Greenville County Emergency Management. Those who wish to volunteer will follow instructions given in the email or phone call. **CERT members are never allowed to self-activate as a representative of the CERT program.**

Upon arriving to a volunteer opportunity, Advanced CERT members must present their issued identification card, sign in, and follow any other instructions they have received. While volunteering, Advanced CERT members will wear their provided uniform and display their issued identification card at all times unless otherwise instructed.

Volunteers will have a Team Leader or supervisor at all times. It is the volunteer's responsibility to remain in communication with his or her Team Leader/supervisor and to follow his or her instructions. Any issues, accidents, or concerns are to be immediately reported to the Team Leader/supervisor.

If volunteers need to leave for any reason before a scheduled shift or assignment is completed, they will notify their Team Leader or supervisor and provide a briefing to the leader or whoever is assuming their position before signing out.

When an assignment or shift is completed, volunteers will be debriefed and will sign out before leaving.

## **Section 5: Catastrophic Event Procedures**

In the event of a catastrophic event in their community, CERT members are to act on their own behalf, and not on behalf of the Greenville County CERT program. They may coordinate with each other to provide assistance in their communities, but they are not officially acting as members of the Greenville County CERT program and should follow all instructions given to them by professional responders, if present.

When acting on their own behalf, CERT members may not wear their CERT uniform or any other apparel that identifies them as a CERT member. They may show their CERT identification card to first responders, but are not to display it openly. They have no special privileges and are only present to offer assistance to their neighbors in the absence of professional responders or to ask professional responders if they can assist in any way.

## **Acknowledgements**

Greenville County thanks the cities of Rancho Cucamonga and Hemet, California as well as Gloucester, Massachusetts for their assistance in developing these materials.

## Appendix 1: Code Of Conduct

- A. Members of CERT volunteer at the sole discretion of Greenville County Emergency Management.
- B. CERT members are volunteers of Greenville County. As such, their status as a volunteer is contingent on performing their assigned duties with the utmost care and consideration.
- C. CERT members are not emergency services personnel as defined by state law and as such are not exempt from federal, state and local traffic laws when volunteering. Therefore, all CERT members must use due care, diligence, and appropriate safety measures when responding to a request for volunteers, as directed.
- D. All participating volunteers must be trained and understand the coordinated command and control structure of CERT and ICS and agree to operate within its constraints.
- E. Members of CERT shall make no representations on behalf of CERT in any manner to any party and shall direct all requests and inquiries from the media and others directly to a Public Information Officer (PIO) or the Greenville County CERT Coordinator.
- F. CERT members shall not carry or possess any weapons or be intoxicated or otherwise impaired while undertaking activities as a CERT volunteer. (Pocket knives are permissible.)
- G. CERT members shall not engage in harassment or discrimination of any kind.
- H. CERT members shall conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times. This includes but is not limited to avoiding or removing themselves from conflicts, and not intentionally discrediting CERT.
- I. CERT members will not participate in operations that serve to promote political agendas, other organizations, personal financial gain, or personal ideologies of any kind while representing the CERT program.
- J. CERT members shall not accept any personal gratuity.
- K. CERT members will wear their uniform and display their CERT identification card while acting in an approved volunteer role. CERT members will not wear their uniform or display their identification card unless acting in an approved volunteer role or as part of an official CERT promotional activity.
- L. CERT members will maintain confidentiality with all information they receive and have access to, including contact information of other CERT members and any information on persons they assist while volunteering.
- M. CERT members are to keep personal opinions and actions separate from those made as a representative of the organization. If you have a situation that might constitute or lead to a conflict of interest or might be perceived as a conflict of interest, notify your Team leader/supervisor or the Greenville County CERT Coordinator immediately.
- N. CERT members are not allowed to self-deploy as representatives of the CERT program. Any actions outside of the purview of an official request for volunteers are the personal responsibility of the CERT member. The member's volunteer status may be terminated if the procedures outlined in this SOP are not followed or if the member acts outside the scope of his or her training.
- O. CERT members shall remain in contact with their Team Leader/supervisor and confine their activities to the stated mission and directives.

- P. CERT members are to immediately notify their Team Leader/supervisor of assignments that are beyond their capabilities based on their physical abilities, experience, training and knowledge. If unable to do so, the CERT member may make discretionary decisions based on appropriate intent and good judgment but are to notify their Team Leader/supervisor as soon as possible.
- Q. CERT members shall immediately inform their Team Leader/supervisor of any safety hazards or accidents, including animal bites, punctures, scratches or any other type of injury.
- R. All CERT members are subject to dismissal from the program for not adhering to the CERT Standard Operating Procedures at the sole discretion of Greenville County Emergency Management. Some examples of actions that could result in permanent removal from the CERT program are:
- Self-deployment to an incident or scene wearing CERT apparel and/or claiming to be acting on behalf of the CERT program
  - Unprofessional, aggressive, insubordinate, discriminatory or harassing behavior toward other CERT members, residents, first responders, or other authorities
  - Failure to follow direction of public safety personnel or anyone identified in a supervisory position
  - Conviction of a felony, or a misdemeanor, including pleas of guilty or nolo contendere

## **Appendix 2: Acknowledgement of Procedures, Release of Liability, and Consent to Background Check**

I acknowledge that I have read, understand and agree to abide by the CERT Standard Operating Procedures and the CERT Code of Conduct and that I am an at-will volunteer who can be terminated at any time, with or without cause. Breach of listed Code of Conduct terms may result in the permanent loss of ability to volunteer for CERT. The County reserves the right to release any volunteer who is in conflict with the goals of the program.

I further acknowledge that there are inherent risks involved with being a volunteer for the CERT Program and hereby waive any claims against, indemnify, and hold harmless Greenville County, its respective members, sponsors, representatives and supervisory authorities, from any and all liability, including attorney fees, that may result from illness, personal injury, property damage, or wrong doing resulting from involvement with the CERT Program. I understand it is my responsibility to have health insurance to cover any injuries I may sustain while volunteering.

I also consent for a criminal history investigation and background check to be conducted on myself. I understand that any criminal activity (past or future) may disqualify me from participating in the CERT volunteer program.

\_\_\_\_\_  
CERT Member Name (*Print*)

\_\_\_\_\_  
CERT Member Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Greenville County CERT Coordinator Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_