
For Immediate Release

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NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ENCOURAGES QUEENS RESIDENTS TO JOIN LOCAL COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS (CERTs)

Volunteers participate in a 10-session basic training program in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response

CERT graduates join local teams where they support their communities by assisting City agencies that prepare for and respond to emergencies

February 15, 2019 – Do you live or work in Queens? Want to make sure your family and community are prepared for the next emergency? Join a New York City Emergency Management Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) in your borough.

New York City CERT volunteers participate in a 10-session basic training program in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response skills, including fire safety, light search and rescue, disaster medical operations, and traffic management. Students receive instruction from active members of the NYPD, FDNY and NYC Emergency Management. After completing basic training, new members join local CERTs to support their communities by assisting City agencies that prepare for and respond to emergencies. Currently, there are 10 Community Emergency Response Teams in Queens with 210 members.

“CERT volunteers are an essential part of New York City’s emergency preparation. The ability to call on a group of trained volunteers in a time of crisis is extremely valuable,” said **New York City Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito**. “On behalf of NYC Emergency Management, I would like to thank all the CERT members that contribute their time and energy to keeping communities safe. I also encourage more New Yorkers to get involved in the program to help create more resilient and connected communities.”

The latest cycle, held Tuesdays and Thursdays, started on February 7 at the Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School in Forest Hills, Queens. There are currently 17 students enrolled gaining the skills needed to help prepare their communities. The Bronx is also hosting a CERT basic training class at Taft High School. Both classes are part of CERT’s 33rd basic training cycle.

“As CERT trainees, you will continue to follow your heart and impulses while learning how to move safely,” said **Sandra Williams**, CERT Queens Borough Coordinator. “We are excited that you will join our Queens community. Community Emergency Response Teams in Queens have been connecting with our communities and with you on board, we will be able to do more. Together we will continue to educate and support all of Queens making it one the safest boroughs in New York City.”

After completing basic training, New York City CERT members have the opportunity to become more involved with supporting their communities before, during, and after emergencies. This includes hosting emergency preparedness presentations, participating in advanced trainings and simulation drills, and assisting first responders during emergencies.

“I do a lot of work with disabled New Yorkers so I understand the importance of emergency preparation. It can be difficult for individuals with learning disabilities and physical impairments to react to an emergency if they have not been prepared prior to,” said **CERT student Cynthia Workman**. “This is one of the biggest reasons I decided to join CERT. We need to make sure that disabled New Yorkers and their loved ones are informed and ready for the next emergency.”

Since the launch of NYC CERT, members have responded to a host of emergencies throughout the city. This included Hurricane Sandy, where volunteers canvassed neighborhoods to inform residents of pre-storm evacuation orders. After the hurricane, CERT members conducted welfare checks and provided food, water, and supplies to homebound residents and those without power. CERT volunteers also staffed and supported shelters, cleared downed trees, fueled emergency vehicles, aided in missing person searches, and assisted at food distribution sites and donation centers throughout the city.

In 2017, Queens CERT members provided invaluable assistance during the aftermath of a five-alarm fire at a residential building in Elmhurst. Through close coordination with NYC Emergency Management, CERT members assisted residents with language translation, supporting families at the City’s service center, and escorting displaced residents back to their apartments.

“CERT members have a range of responsibilities, but preparing New Yorkers is among the most crucial,” said **CERT student Abena Osei-Mensah**. “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Make a plan and get involved to help create a more resilient community.”

NYC Emergency Management hosts Community Emergency Response Team training cycles three times a year alternating throughout the five boroughs. The next training cycle is scheduled in May, with classes in Staten Island and Brooklyn.

There are currently more than 50 CERT teams throughout the City with more than 1,200 active members. To apply to the NYC CERT program, individuals must be 18 or older, and live or work in NYC. For more information about the CERT program, or if you are interested in becoming a CERT volunteer, call 311 or visit [NYC.gov/cert](http://nyc.gov/cert).

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