



For Immediate Release

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FIFTY VOLUNTEERS JOIN LOCAL COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS (CERTs) SERVING NYC NEIGHBORHOODS

December 3, 2019 – The New York City Emergency Management Department is adding a new group of volunteers to Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs). Fifty volunteers graduated Monday from the training program, and will now support their communities by assisting City agencies that prepare for and respond to emergencies.

“Throughout the year, CERT volunteers dedicate their time and energy to prepare New Yorkers for emergencies,” **New York City Emergency Management Commissioner Deanne Criswell** said. “Today we recognize the fifty graduates who will join more than 1,200 volunteers citywide who are helping their communities through training, education, and response.”

Monday’s graduation marked the end to the 35th training cycle since the New York City CERT program launched in 2003. Eighteen of the graduates will join Community Emergency Response Teams in Brooklyn, 16 will join teams in Manhattan, nine will join Bronx teams, six will join Queens’ teams, and one will join the Staten Island CERT team. The graduates participated in a 10-session training program, which began in October. The disaster preparedness and emergency response sessions included lessons in basic fire safety, search and rescue, traffic management, and first aid and triage.

“The CERT training has increased my awareness and understanding of my community and the physical environment around me,” **CERT graduate Thomas Eisele** said. “I now have a new set of skills to help keep my family, my neighbors, and my city safe in times of emergency. It’s a great course; the CERT program is a terrific way to be of service.”

Recent **CERT graduate Kenneth Leong** has already put his training to good use: “I live in Queens and work at a hotel in Brooklyn and there was a fire at my hotel recently,” he said. “After taking the fire safety course with CERT, I gave a presentation at my work on how we can be better prepared should a fire happen again.”

Leong now feels ready to face any emergency and looks forward to helping others in his community feel the same way.

During the ceremony, the 2019 John D. Solomon Award for Exemplary Service in Emergency Preparedness Education was presented to Susan Flaschenberg from the Brooklyn 13 CERT team. Flaschenberg was recognized for her extensive efforts in helping her south Brooklyn neighbors prepare for emergencies in the Coney Island, Brighton Beach, and Sea Gate areas.

This cycle’s training classes were held in Brooklyn and Manhattan. NYC Emergency Management First Deputy Commissioner Andrew D’Amora, along with NYPD Deputy Inspector Phylis Byrne and FDNY Deputy Chief James Brosi, presided over the graduation ceremony held in the Emergency Operations Center at NYC Emergency Management headquarters in Brooklyn. Cycle 36 will begin in early 2020 in Queens and the Bronx.

To sign up for the training, visit [NYC.gov/EmergencyManagement](https://www.nyc.gov/emergencymanagement).

Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) in New York City

The New York City CERT program started in 2003 with 106 volunteers. The new Cycle 35 CERT graduates will join more than 1,200 credentialed CERT volunteers representing more than 50 teams throughout New York City. The 50 graduates received training from a number of the City's highly trained emergency responders, including 13 FDNY instructors, 7 FDNY/EMS instructors, 7 NYPD instructors, and 9 NYC Emergency Management liaisons.

For more information about the CERT program, or if you are interested in becoming a CERT volunteer, call 311 or visit NYC.gov/EmergencyManagement.

-30-

PHOTO CAPTION: *CERT_35*: Commissioner Criswell (center) with Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) graduates and support staff at the 35th CERT graduation held at NYC Emergency Management headquarters in Brooklyn.

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