



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

08-09

July 23, 2008

**OEM HOLDS GRADUATION CEREMONY FOR EIGHT COMMUNITY
EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS**

With New Teams the City Now Has More Than 1,000 Active CERT Volunteers

New York City Office of Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Bruno today joined Deputy Mayor Edward Skyler and Fire Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta in presiding over a graduation ceremony for 159 Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers. The volunteers make up eight CERTs that graduated after completing an intensive, 11-week training program in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response skills. With today's graduation, the City now has more than 1,000 active CERT volunteers.

"The CERT program is a successful collaboration between our emergency response agencies," said Deputy Mayor Skyler. "Our 63 teams play an important role in ensuring that New York City is prepared for any type of emergency. CERT volunteers provide valuable assistance to emergency responders and the public in times of crisis, in addition to preparing their communities to respond to and recover from emergencies."

"This year marks the fifth anniversary of the CERT program, and each time we activate a team I am thrilled by the dedication these volunteers show for their communities," said Commissioner Bruno. "Whether they are asked to staff a reception center during a building vacate or deliver ice to their neighbors during a power outage, CERT volunteers have shown time and time again that they are ready to help out at a moment's notice, and we are grateful for their service."

"Today's CERT graduation is yet another example of New Yorkers coming together to help the City when disaster strikes," said Commissioner Scoppetta. "Since the program's inception five years ago, the City's CERT volunteers have been instrumental in assisting first responders during emergency situations. We are all grateful for their dedication and the time they have sacrificed in helping us to keep New York City safe."

CERT volunteers participate in an 11-week training program in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response skills taught by active and retired personnel from the Police and Fire Departments. After completing training that includes lessons in fire safety, search and rescue, and disaster medical operations, CERTs support their local communities by assisting City agencies that prepare for and respond to disasters. CERT volunteers also work to educate their communities about emergency preparedness through OEM's Ready New York campaign.

In 2007 the CERT program was expanded to private sector businesses through the creation of Corporate CERT. At today's graduation, a group of 31 volunteers from UBS became the second

team to complete OEM's Corporate CERT training. The other corporate team, BNP Paribas, graduated in May, 2007.

CERT volunteers most recently assisted emergency responders by delivering ice to Brooklyn residents during a power outage earlier this month. CERTs were also recently activated at two construction accidents on the Upper East Side of Manhattan where they staffed American Red Cross reception centers for building evacuees and delivered drinking water to residents whose utility services were disrupted. CERTs were also activated this year for vacate orders in Williamsburg and Lower Manhattan. In 2007 CERT members in Far Rockaway were among the first to arrive at a six alarm fire in their neighborhood. Their familiarity with the residents and local resources helped speed up efforts to provide food and shelter to evacuees.

In addition to assisting first responders during emergencies, CERT teams play an important role in emergency training exercises and community events. In early June, CERT members were deployed for HURREX 2008, a full-scale, multi-agency field exercise to test the deployment of the City's emergency supply stockpile and the setup of shelters. In August, CERT teams will participate in National Night Out, a citywide event that aims to create safer cities by promoting neighborhood spirit and police-community partnerships. In September CERTs will play an active role in National Preparedness Month activities in all five boroughs.

The CERT program is a collaborative effort between OEM and the New York City Police and Fire Departments. CERTs are now active in 46 of the City's 59 Community Boards. OEM hopes to install teams in every community board by December, 2009. Six new CERTs in Brooklyn, the Bronx and Manhattan will begin training in September.

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

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