



The CERT Report

October 2010

Tornados Twist New York City, CERT Responds



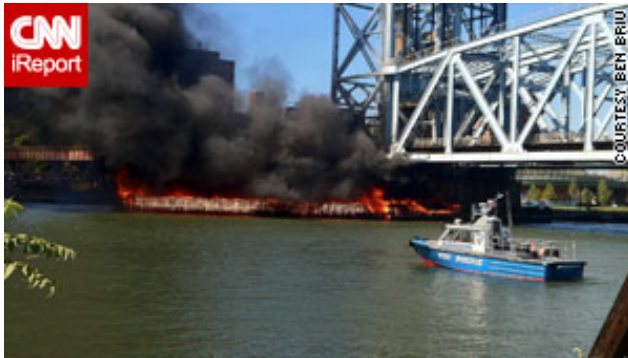
A scene from Forest Hills, Queens in the days following the storm, taken by Queens 6 team member Robert Schnell.

Most New Yorkers who were in the city early in the evening on September 16 experienced a violent storm. Heavy rain, wind, and hail fell across the five boroughs, and two tornados touched down in Brooklyn and Queens. They caused heavy damage to trees, with many limbs falling on roads and sidewalks.

While teams provided traffic control in the immediate aftermath of the storm, nine CERT teams stepped into action to conduct damage surveys in the areas most affected by falling limbs and debris. The surveys helped the Parks Department, FEMA, and those working to clean up the debris focus their efforts on specific locations. These surveys helped responders open up roads and sidewalks, and eventually led to the event being classified as a federal emergency.

Kudos to the CERT members who volunteered their time to help survey the damage from the storm. Thankfully, these events do not happen often, but when they do CERT is ready.

Manhattan 11 Members Ready to Serve at Scene of Fire



A view from the Harlem River showing the extent of the Metro North railroad bridge fire on September 20.

On September 20 a fire erupted under the Metro North railroad bridge that spans the Harlem River near East 132nd Street and Harlem River Drive in Manhattan. The fire climbed up the anchorage of the bridge, causing service disruptions and heavy smoke.

Manhattan 11 team members Keith Massey, Deidre Hopkins, and Deputy Team Chief

NYC Proves It's Resilience with the Help of CERT



A CERT volunteer victim is attended to by FDNY personnel at the mass-casualty exercise on October 17.

On October 17 and 24 CERT members participated in NYC Resilience, a series of full-scale exercises organized by OEM in coordination with other City agencies. On October 17 members simulated victims affected by a car bomb explosion on Jackson Avenue in Long Island City. On October 24 members simulated families who were looking for information about those affected by the explosion on the 17th and performed duties as a CERT member to help the families receive services.

The goal of NYC Resilience was to evaluate the ability of City agencies to respond to a mass-casualty incident, activate the Unified Victim Identification System, and execute the City's Family Assistance Center plan.

As with any exercise, including the disaster simulations that capitate the 10-week basic CERT training, the presence of live victims is infinitely more instructive than simple mannequins for first responders and responding personnel. There were many take-home lessons from these exercises that would have been lost without the opportunity to practice with real people whose needs, although simulated, had to be addressed.

"By training in an environment that is as real as possible, all of our agencies and partners learn what we already do right, and what we can improve on," said OEM Commissioner Joseph Bruno. With CERT's help the City will be better able to revise and update emergency response plans and assist New Yorkers if an event like this were to happen.

New Credentialing Process

Richard Toussaint, also members of the Harlem River Park Task Force, were on scene as the fire raged. They checked in with the OEM representative in the field and called Watch Command to notify OEM of their presence.

The fire was ultimately put under control without the need to activate the Manhattan 11 team. However, the team members knew the layout of the park and where resources could be utilized.

Overall, this was an excellent example of following proper protocol as well as the depth of community involvement that makes the CERT program so robust in New York City.

National Preparedness Month



Brooklyn CERT team members, ARC volunteers, and OEM staff take a break from distributing Ready NY literature to pose for a shot outside Brooklyn Borough Hall at the National Preparedness Month Kickoff Event on September 2.

This September marked the most successful National Preparedness Month for New York City thus far, and it would not have been possible without the help of CERT.

Teams helped organize over 50 preparedness presentations and fairs across the city during September. Over 130,000 Ready NY guides were distributed, and in total teams logged over 2,900 volunteer hours educating their communities. Teams reached out to their local stores, with whom they have either partnered in the past or forged new relationships, and were present at the Target in the Queens Center Mall, Brooklyn Ikea, and Staten Island CostCo. The month was capitulated by a regional CERT exercise in Nassau County on September 26.

"I have seen many tragedies that could have been prevented by taking simple precautions," said Fire Department Commissioner Sal Cassano, as he, OEM Commissioner Joseph Bruno, and other agency and organization heads helped kick off the month. "We want to let all New Yorkers know: being prepared could save your life." This sentiment typifies the National Preparedness Month message, and with the help of CERT more and more New Yorkers are taking it to heart.

OEM has begun the process to transition to a more sophisticated credentialing system for management of the CERT program. This includes the use of a high-definition camera to take ID pictures; CERT members may recall being photographed with a small web camera, the pictures from which could be less-than-flattering. As credentials will be reissued over the next few years for members satisfying the recredentialing requirements, CERT members will need to be re-photographed with this new camera.

Some CERT members have already had their new ID picture taken at a training, planned event, or team meeting. If you have not, please stay tuned to e-mails from OEM and from your team leadership as to when this will happen.

Cycle 15 in Progress

Cycle 15 of the 10-week basic training class kicked off to a great start at the end of September. There are five classes throughout the city, training 140 talented participants--good luck to all those in class, and please give a warm welcome to new members to your teams post-graduation!

CERT Quiz (Flu Edition)

1.
What is the peak period for seasonal influenza each year?
2.
Is it safe to get a flu vaccine?
3.
What should I do if I get the flu?

Answers:

1. *Although timing varies year to year, flu is generally most prevalent in the United States from October to May.*
2. *Yes. The most serious complications from flu shots can include soreness at the vaccination site and low-grade fever, persisting for at most one to two days. The benefits of receiving the vaccine (not getting the flu, and thus not being sick for a week) far outweigh any minor consequences!*
3. *The first step is to stay at home as soon as you notice symptoms so that you do not infect others. In most cases, flu should be treated with increased intake of fluids, bed rest, and taking any over-the-counter medications to alleviate symptoms. Consult with your physician if you are experiencing problems breathing or any other serious complications, and in extreme cases consider visiting the hospital.*

For more information about NYC OEM CERT, log on to the website at www.nyc.gov/cert or call the CERT hotline at (718) 422 - 8585.

CERT is always looking to train motivated individuals to prepare for and respond to emergencies. Anyone looking for more information may contact the CERT hotline or e-mail cert@oem.nyc.gov.

Check out the National FEMA CERT Newsletter:
<http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/newsletter.shtm>

