



For Immediate Release

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**NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TO HOLD GRADUATION CEREMONY FOR
191 COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM VOLUNTEERS**

December 15, 2014 – New York City Office of Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito will join FDNY Chief of Department James Leonard, NYPD Chief of Patrol Carlos Gomez, and Chief Service Officer for NYC Service Paula Gavin in presiding over a graduation ceremony for 191 Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers and the presentation of the annual John D. Solomon Award for Exemplary Service in Emergency Preparedness and Education. The graduates have completed a 10-week training program in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response skills that included lessons in fire safety, search and rescue, traffic management, first aid and triage. The graduation will be held in the auditorium of The Urban Assembly School for Emergency Management (UASEM) at 411 Pearl Street, New York, NY, at 6:30 p.m. on December 15, 2014. The UASEM is the first high school in the country dedicated to educating students in understanding the principles of emergency management.

“These CERT graduates will join a team of individuals who selflessly serve their communities during critical emergencies,” said Commissioner Esposito. “They embody the true spirit of what New Yorkers exemplify – looking out for each other.”

“When there is a blackout, a storm, flooding, or any kind of large-scale emergency, CERT members are right there in the middle of it providing help for their neighbors and assistance to first responders,” said FDNY Chief James E. Leonard. “As we move towards the winter months, I know this outstanding group of graduates will step up when called upon, just like every CERT class before them.”

The new CERT graduates will join more than 1,800 active CERT volunteers representing more than 50 teams throughout New York City. The new Cycle 23 graduates will be bolstering the memberships of 14 teams in Brooklyn, 10 teams in the Bronx, 14 teams in Manhattan, nine teams in Queens, and CERT’s sole team in Staten Island. Of the 191 graduates, 56 were trained over the summer session, while 135 joined the fall session. The graduates received training and tutelage from a number of the city’s highly trained emergency responders, including 20 FDNY instructors, 14 FDNY/EMS instructors, 11 NYPD instructors, and 19 OEM liaisons.

“A heartfelt congratulations to today’s graduating class of CERT volunteers—New Yorkers thank you for your commitment to serve your communities when they need it most,” said Paula Gavin, Chief Service Officer for the City of New York. “From disaster preparedness to fire safety and traffic management, the completion of this training program shows you have both the

skills and dedication to put others first during emergencies. Volunteer CERT teams strengthen communities, support our neighborhoods—and demonstrate that volunteering is good for you and good for your city."

Today's graduation will also feature the winner of the John D. Solomon Award for Exemplary Service in Emergency Preparedness Education. This year's award will be presented to William Fasbender of Queens 4 CERT. Fasbender has been an active CERT volunteer since 2007, and he continues to play an integral part working to expand awareness throughout his community with the use of Ready New York preparedness materials, and is a frequent participant at NYC CERT and NYC Citizen Corps trainings. This year's finalists, JoLinda Ruth Cogen (Manhattan 10N CERT), Denise Palermo (Staten Island Port Richmond CERT), Glenn Wolin (Brooklyn 14 CERT), and Hakiem Yahmadi (Bronx 1 CERT) will also be honored.

Abby Solomon, who was instrumental in creating the John D. Solomon Award, praised Fasbender for his dedication to emergency preparedness and highlighted her husband's support of CERT. "John believed emergency preparedness should be viewed as a responsibility of citizenship in the 21st century," she said. "He would be so honored that this year's recipient, William Fasbender, is being recognized for his remarkable contributions with an award that carries his (John's) name."

Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) in New York City

The New York City CERT program started in 2003 with 106 volunteers. Today, the City has more than 50 CERT teams and more than 1,800 active volunteers representing all five boroughs. New York City CERT volunteers participate in a 10-week training program in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response skills taught by active and retired members of the Police and Fire Departments. After completing training, CERTs support their local communities by assisting City agencies that prepare for and respond to emergencies.

In response to the East Harlem building collapse on March 12, 2014, OEM deployed 87 New York City CERT volunteers to assist with response and recovery efforts. These volunteers managed traffic, monitored the Resident Service Center entryways, assisted residents, and served as interpreters for residents who needed Spanish, Chinese, French, and Japanese language assistance. This was CERT's largest activation since Hurricane Sandy. CERT volunteers also work to educate their communities about emergency preparedness through OEM's Ready New York campaign.

The next round of CERT training will begin in February 2015. For more information about the CERT program, or if you are interested in becoming a CERT volunteer, call 311 or visit www.nyc.gov.

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EVENT : CERT Cycle 23 Graduation Ceremony

LOCATION : The Urban Assembly School for Emergency Management
Auditorium, 411 Pearl Street, New York, NY 10038

TIME : 6:30 PM

MEDIA CONTACT: Nancy Greco Silvestri/Omar Bourne (OEM) (718) 422-4888

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