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**NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CELEBRATES THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF
NYC CERT PROGRAM**

New [video](#) and [podcast episode](#) highlight the importance of CERT volunteers

November 8, 2018 — The New York City Emergency Management Department celebrated the 15th anniversary of the New York City CERT program at The Wyckoff Gardens Community Center in Boerum Hill, Brooklyn on Thursday, November 8. The event featured remarks from New York City Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito, FDNY Chief of Training Thomas Richardson, and NYPD Inspector Phylis Byrne, commanding officer of the Auxiliary Police Section. New York City Emergency Management also released a new [video](#) detailing the roles CERT members play in their communities. FDNY personnel and current CERT members were on hand to conduct a fire safety drill.

Since the launch of NYC CERT in 2003, members have responded to a host of emergencies throughout the city including Hurricane Sandy, where volunteers canvassed neighborhoods to inform residents of pre-storm evacuation orders. After the storm, CERT members conducted welfare checks providing 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.

During the 2014 East Harlem gas explosion, CERT volunteers assisted first responders with traffic management. Volunteers also staffed and supported resident service centers, providing psychological first aid and serving as interpreters for residents requiring language assistance. CERTs also played active roles during the 2015 East Village gas explosion, supporting first responders with perimeter security, resident escorts, and traffic management and staffing City reception centers. Recently, CERT volunteers assisted New York City Emergency Management with the Hurricane Maria response efforts, preparing donations, supporting the City's Hurricane Service Center, and distributing informational material to affected residents from Puerto Rico. This past summer, CERT members supported the city during the Flatiron steam pipe explosion, assisting residents at the reception center.

“CERT volunteers play a vital role assisting our department and first responders before, during, and after emergencies,” said **New York City Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito**. “They’ve been an asset to the city during the past 15 years, and we look forward to many more years of exceptional service.”

“For the last 15 years, CERT members have been an important asset for our city when communities across the five boroughs are severely impacted by major storms and dangerous events,” said **Fire Commissioner Daniel A. Nigro**. “FDNY members are proud to train these

outstanding men and women who generously volunteer their time to help their fellow residents and first responders when it's needed most."

"NYC CERT is a vital program that allows many of our residents to assist first responders and serve their communities during emergencies," said **NYCHA General Manager Vito Mustaciuolo**. "I have seen firsthand throughout the years the incredible work CERT has accomplished. NYCHA is thrilled to celebrate CERT's 15th Anniversary at Wyckoff Gardens and we look forward to continuing our partnership with NYC Emergency Management, NYPD and FDNY."

"I congratulate NYC Emergency Management on celebrating 15 years of the CERT program. CERT volunteers have been an incredible asset to our communities, providing critical services in times of crises," said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams**. "I'm proud to say that members of my staff are CERT-certified. It is important that we continue to promote preparedness so that we are ready for any future emergencies."

Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) in New York City

The Los Angeles Fire Department developed the CERT volunteer program in 1985, expanding it two years later through a collaboration with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). NYC CERT was adapted from this larger organization in 2003. NYC CERT volunteers receive training specific to the city's needs. Today, there are more than 50 CERT teams and more than 1,200 active CERT volunteers throughout the five boroughs.

NYC CERT volunteers participate in a 10-session basic training program in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response skills taught by active members of the NYPD and FDNY. After completing training, new members join their local teams to support their communities by assisting City agencies that prepare for and respond to emergencies.

NYC Emergency Management 'Prep Talk' Podcast Series and CERT Video

In the latest episode of "Prep Talk," hosts Omar Bourne and Allison Pennisi highlight the work of NYC Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers as the program celebrates its 15th anniversary. Bourne and Pennisi chat with Christina Farrell, deputy commissioner of external affairs at NYC Emergency Management, FDNY Deputy Chief Jim Brosi, and NYPD Inspector Phylis Byrne. The special guests discuss CERT training, CERT volunteers' roles in helping first responders during emergencies, and the importance of helping the community through volunteering. Click to listen to the latest episode on [SoundCloud](#) and [iTunes](#), and [subscribe now](#) to stay up-to-date on the latest episodes.

New York City Emergency Management also released a new [video](#) to commemorate CERT's 15th anniversary. The new [video](#) features several CERT members who discuss their volunteer roles, from preparing communities to assisting first responders during emergencies.

Bios

Christina Farrell, deputy commissioner for external affairs, joined NYC Emergency Management in 2003. She is responsible for the agency's communication with outside entities including press, the public, community groups, and private sector partners. She also oversees intergovernmental affairs, community outreach and Ready New York, the city's preparedness campaign. Prior to joining NYC Emergency Management, Farrell served as the director of the NYC Mayor's Office of Grants Administration. She holds a bachelor's degree in international relations and economics from Colgate University, and a master's in public administration from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Jim Brosi, a lifelong Queens resident and former police officer, has been with the FDNY for 26 years. Brosi is currently a Deputy Chief assigned to the seventh division in the north Bronx. Brosi has worked with the CERT program since 2004 and is currently teaching the CERT Manhattan class.

Inspector Phylis S. Byrne was appointed to the Police Department in June of 1992, starting in the 70th Precinct (Flatbush Brooklyn) and eventually working as a police officer in all of Brooklyn South. Inspector Byrne was promoted to sergeant in 1997, lieutenant in 2001, captain in 2005, deputy inspector in 2011, and inspector in 2016. During her career in the NYPD, Inspector Byrne has also served in Brooklyn South Task Force, the fifth precinct, Brooklyn South Narcotics, Brooklyn South Vice, Support Services Bureau, Pension Section, Organized Crime Control Bureau's training unit, and Transit District's 20 and 23 in Queens. Inspector Byrne is currently the commanding officer of the NYPD's Auxiliary Police Section, the largest volunteer police force in the country, consisting of over 4,300 members. She has previously commanded Transit District 23 (Rockaways) and served as the executive officer of Transit District 20. She is also a licensed social worker (LMSW) and a certified alcohol and substance abuse counselor (CASAC) who has worked as a substance abuse counselor in an intensive outpatient facility in Long Island. Inspector Byrne holds a master's degree in social work from Fordham University and a bachelor's degree in Psychology from CUNY at the College of Staten Island.

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