

For Immediate Release

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**NEW YORK CITY COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (NYC CERT)
PROGRAM WELCOMES 27 NEW MEMBERS**

New graduates are joining 24 divisions of credentialed volunteers to help their communities during emergencies

July 20, 2023 – The New York City Emergency Management Department welcomed 27 new Community Emergency Response Team (NYC CERT) volunteers to its program during a hybrid graduation ceremony on Wednesday, July 19. The NYC CERT basic training cycle includes 11 sessions that focus on disaster preparedness and emergency response, equipping volunteers with skills in basic fire safety, search and rescue, traffic management, and first aid and triage. NYC Emergency Management offered the training program with instructors from the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) and New York City Police Department (NYPD) Auxiliary Unit.

"Time and again, New York City has proven its resilience in the face of adversity and challenges. Today, we are welcoming 27 new members to our Community Emergency Response Team, each one adding to that strength and resolve," said **New York City Emergency Management Commissioner Zach Iscol**. "These dedicated volunteers have completed rigorous training to prepare themselves for supporting our city during emergencies. Their commitment reflects our collective responsibility to care for our neighbors and our community. As our CERT family grows, we're not merely increasing our numbers - we're strengthening our resilience, fortifying our unity, and making a promise for a safer future. Together, we're not just preparing for emergencies; we're building a future where every New Yorker is an integral part of the solution."

"For two decades, New York City Community Emergency Response Team members have helped to keep the people of our great city safe," said **NYPD Commissioner Edward A. Caban**. "These dedicated volunteers are truly invested in their communities. They give back in a variety of ways, and their work exemplifies our guiding principles of public service. I thank New York City Emergency Management, the FDNY, and every CERT instructor, trainer, and staff member for their support of this vital public-safety program."

"We take tremendous pride in the continued partnership between the FDNY and the NYC Emergency Management Community Emergency Response Teams," said **Fire Commissioner Laura Kavanagh**. "CERT is a great asset to all first responders and the contributions made by these dedicated volunteers is commendable. Their commitment ensures our communities are prepared for any challenge. I look forward to seeing the great work these graduates will do."

During the graduation, 33 members from across the city received Presidential Service Award certificates for volunteering over 100 hours last year. The award was presented by NYC Emergency Management Deputy Commissioner for Community Engagement Herman Schaffer.

“As we welcome our 27 new graduates into the CERT program, we are also celebrating those volunteers who are receiving the prestigious Presidential Service Award. These volunteers have shown incredible commitment to their communities and are a model for our new graduates who will be joining our program,” said **NYC Emergency Management Deputy Commissioner, Community Preparedness Herman Schaffer**. “I wish to congratulate our new graduates and our award recipients for their achievement.”

Most recently, NYC CERT members have responded to both planned and unplanned emergency deployments. These deployments included: the New York City Pride March, the Mermaid Parade in Brooklyn, the Five Bike Boro Tour, and cultural events at Gracie Mansion. CERT members were also able to support the NYPD 100th Precinct Easter Egg Hunt, Asylum Seeker Respite Centers, and several July 4th events including Nathan’s Hot Dog Contest and Macy’s 4th of July Fireworks. Assemblywoman Maritza Davila’s office and the Knickerbocker committee requested CERT members to support all pedestrian management for many of their events.

CERT members also work year-round to ensure their communities are prepared for emergencies, providing information and resources to assist residents with creating an emergency plan for their friends and family. NYC Emergency Management hosts CERT training cycles three times a year.

Over the years, with more than 265,000 hours of volunteer work, CERT members have also assisted efforts outside of New York City. In 2010, CERT staff members traveled to Haiti following the impact of the earthquake to teach CERT preparedness, and in 2017 after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico, they supported donations operations with the NYCEM Logistics teams. Prior to the Covid health emergency, CERT members assisted with flyer distribution in 2015 and 2016 for Ebola and Legionnaire’s disease, respectively.

“As a new CERT member, I am now better equipped both mentally and physically to support my community in the event of a disaster. Even if I am never deployed, I have already shared the importance of functional smoke alarms and go bags with my neighbors and friends and can help relay key information to first responders in any developing emergencies that I see,” said **NYC CERT Member Chris Lung**. “I joined CERT because I recently moved to New York, and fell in love with the city, and wanted to give back to the community. A few months after moving I witnessed and helped support a few local and minor emergencies. I felt like I did a good job under pressure but wanted to learn more about emergency response so that I am better prepared to help in the future.”

Since its launch, NYC CERT has responded to a host of emergencies, and local divisions quickly adapt to the City’s specific emergency needs. CERT members also work year-round to ensure their communities are prepared for emergencies, providing information and resources to assist residents with creating an emergency plan for their friends and family. NYC Emergency

Management hosts Community Emergency Response Team training cycles three times a year. For more information about the program, or if you are interested in becoming a volunteer, call 311 or visit NYC.gov/cert.

Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) in New York City

The New York City CERT program started in 2003 with 106 volunteers. Today, there are 24 divisions of credentialed volunteers covering all 59 NYC community boards. NYC CERT volunteers participate in a 10-session basic training program where they receive instruction from active members of the FDNY, FDNY-EMS, NYPD, and NYC Emergency Management. Volunteers are trained in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response skills, including fire safety, light search and rescue, disaster medical operations, and traffic management.

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