



# PUBLIC INFORMATION

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## NEW YORKERS ANSWER THE CALL TO SERVE WITH NYC CERT DURING NATIONAL VOLUNTEER MONTH

*Distinguished Members Also Recognized with Awards*



**April 12, 2024** — To kick off National Volunteer Month, New York City Emergency Management welcomed 37 new Community Emergency Response Team (NYC CERT) volunteers to its program during a graduation ceremony on Tuesday, April 9. 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.

“NYC Emergency Management is proud to recognize our CERT volunteers during National Volunteer Month,” said **NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Zach Iscol**. “These exemplary New Yorkers exemplify community service. Through dedicated training and unwavering commitment, CERT volunteers are indispensable to our city’s resilience and emergency response. Their readiness and willingness to act not only saves lives, but supports the safety of our communities before, during, and after emergencies. We are thankful for their service and are thrilled to welcome a new cohort of committed volunteers.”

“In the CERT training, I gained invaluable skills ranging from practical tasks like using a fire

extinguisher, applying a tourniquet, and assembling a go bag, to more complex challenges like assessing disaster scenes,” said **Jennifer Spiegler**, a graduate from CERT Manhattan Division 5. “The highlight for me was our final class’s disaster simulation. Collaborating as a team to use our newly acquired skills in a high-pressure scenario was exhilarating yet sobering. It demonstrated the difficulty of maintaining situational awareness and making critical decisions under stress. The experience left me buzzing with adrenaline and unable to sleep, filled with immense respect and appreciation for our city’s first responders. I am deeply thankful to our instructors from FDNY, NYCEM, and NYPD for their expert guidance and generosity. Meeting fellow trainees from diverse backgrounds, all united by a commitment to serve our communities, was profoundly inspiring.”

“The CERT program has provided me with a thorough education in disaster preparedness, specifically tailored to the hazards prevalent in our area,” said **Danny Kogan**, a new graduate with Brooklyn Division 7. “It has equipped me with fundamental skills in disaster response, life safety, and rescue operations. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to be part of such a vital initiative.”

During the graduation, Lisa Maurer, Division Chief of Brooklyn Division 1 CERT, received the John D. Solomon Award for Exemplary Service in Emergency Preparedness Education for her extensive efforts in spreading the emergency preparedness message throughout her community. The award was presented by Abby Solomon. Presidential Service Awards were also presented to 45 active CERT members that provided over 100 hours of volunteers service each in 2023. The awards were presented by NYC Emergency Management CERT Recruitment and Retention Specialist, Denise Esposito.

From the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy and Hurricane Ida to the devastating East Village building collapse, NYC CERT volunteers, now numbering over 700, have consistently stepped up to support the City of New York in times of crisis. This graduating class joins a group of committed New Yorkers ready to answer the call, extending beyond these major events to the everyday operations that keep our communities running smoothly.

Most recently, NYC CERT members have responded to both planned and unplanned emergency deployments. These deployments included: the Polar Bear Plunge in Coney Island, the Lunar New Year Parade in Manhattan’s Chinatown, the Valentine’s Day Race in Staten Island, St. Brigid Asylum Seeker Processing Center support and winter clothing packing for asylum seekers, the Annual Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE) survey, and the St. Patrick’s Day Parade in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn among others. For many of these deployments, CERT members provided crowd control and traffic management support.

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, giving even more New Yorkers the opportunity to step up and make a difference.

For more information about the program, or if you are interested in becoming a volunteer, call 311 or visit [nyc.gov/cert](https://nyc.gov/cert). 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.

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