



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

04-09

Thursday, April 16, 2009

**OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMUNITY EMERGENCY  
RESPONSE TEAM ACCEPTS FIVE THOUSAND DOLLAR DONATION FROM  
THE PORT AUTHORITY OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY**

*Donation Supports Team's Emergency Response and Preparedness Education Efforts*

The New York City Office of Emergency Management's (OEM) Port Richmond Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) today thanked the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey for their recent \$5,000 donation, which will support the team's emergency response and preparedness education efforts.

"By supporting first responders and preparing their communities for emergencies, these volunteers are great examples of New Yorkers who have chosen to spend their time giving back to the City," said Commissioner Bruno. "I would like thanks the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey for recognizing and supporting the important contributions this team makes to their community."

"We're pleased to provide assistance to these emergency response volunteers to help them perform their duties throughout Staten Island, which includes the three bridges we operate in the borough," said Paul Pittari, General Manager of the Port Authority's Staten Island Bridges. "Their assistance is invaluable to all those who live and work on Staten Island."

Since the team was founded in 2005, the Port Richmond CERT has logged more than 6,500 volunteer hours, including 530 hours in support of OEM's 2008 National Preparedness Month programs. The team meets weekly and runs regular drills on various disaster scenarios. The Port Richmond CERT is also certified in wilderness search and rescue by the Department of Environmental Conservation and has been called upon twice to assist in looking for missing people on Staten Island.

"The Port Richmond CERT is proud to serve our community and to be part of the New York City Office of Emergency Management CERT program," said Port Richmond CERT Team Chief John Tidona. "We are extremely grateful for the Port Authority's generous donation. The money from this donation will help the team become better prepared and supplied to deal with emergencies."

CERT volunteers participate in an 11-week training program in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response. Classes are taught by active and retired personnel from the Police and Fire Departments. After completing training that includes lessons in fire safety, search and rescue, and disaster medical operations, CERTs support their local communities by assisting City agencies that prepare for and respond to disasters. CERT volunteers also work to educate their communities about emergency preparedness through OEM's Ready New York campaign.

"I am happy to see that the Port Richmond CERT received the funding they needed and I commend Chris Ward and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey for stepping in and providing the critical donation," said Congressman Michael E. McMahon. "When I was a councilman, Councilman Mitchell, in his then capacity as my chief of staff and I worked hard to bring these two organizations together. The Port Authority should feel very proud of the aid they are providing; the Port Richmond CERT is a wonderful resource for the residents of Staten Island's North Shore."

"Back in December I facilitated a request to bring the support of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to the Port Richmond CERT team," said Councilman Mitchell. "I am honored to have initiated and assisted in a process that brings much needed resources and support. Anytime I am able to help government entities to work with and support local groups, I am always eager to lend a hand."

CERT volunteers from other teams recently assisted emergency responders at a major fire in the Bronx and at a warming center in Manhattan. They were also deployed to help the City locate the mysterious maple syrup odor reported in Manhattan, the Bronx and Queens back in February. Last year, CERTs also distributed ice to Brooklyn residents during a power outage and delivered drinking water to Upper East Side residents who were displaced by two construction accidents. In 2007, CERT members in Far Rockaway were among the first to arrive at a six-alarm fire in their neighborhood. Their familiarity with residents and local resources helped speed up efforts to provide food and shelter to evacuees.

For more information on the New York City CERT program or to learn how you can join a team, call 311 or visit [www.nyc.gov/oem](http://www.nyc.gov/oem).

-30-

CONTACT:

Seth Andrews/Chris Gilbride (OEM)

(718) 422-4888