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**OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT HOLDS GRADUATION
CEREMONY FOR 108 COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE
TEAM VOLUNTEERS**

With New Teams the City Now Has More Than 1,400 Active CERT Volunteers

New York City Office of Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph F. Bruno today joined Fire Commissioner Salvatore J. Cassano, Deputy Inspector Phylis Byrne, Commanding Officer of the NYPD Auxiliary Police Section and other City officials in presiding over a graduation ceremony for 108 Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers. The volunteers undergo a 10-week training program in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response skills. With today's graduation, the City now has more than 1,400 active CERT volunteers.

"This is our 16th CERT class, and each time we hold a graduation ceremony I am reminded just how dedicated these volunteers are to their communities," said Commissioner Bruno. "Whether they are asked to dig out fire hydrants after a blizzard or deliver ice to their neighbors during a power outage, CERT volunteers have shown time and time again that they are ready to help out at a moment's notice, and we are extremely grateful for their service."

"The Community Emergency Response Team members here today have shown a great dedication to their community by volunteering to be a part of this valuable program," Fire Commissioner Salvatore J. Cassano said. "They have received training from dedicated instructors in some very important areas, from fire safety to terrorism awareness. I know when their City needs them, they will be there to help."

Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly said, "CERT volunteers proudly serve as vital partners to first responders during critical events, ranging from parades to natural disasters. Their presence and expertise help the police to ensure public safety, and their dedication is a model for civic engagement."

In addition to assisting first responders during emergencies, CERT volunteers play an important role in community events and emergency trainings and exercises. Most recently, CERT members were recognized for their role at the Family Assistance Center (FAC) in assisting family members of the victims involved in the fatal bus accident back in March. At the beginning of the summer they were also deployed to assist with the Five Boro Bike Tour where they directed traffic around designated rest areas.

Last summer, they also worked during the DOT Summer Streets program to assist with pedestrian street control and basic first aid. In addition, CERT volunteers assisted organizers and players during the four-day National Wheelchair Softball Tournament which earned the program volunteers special recognition in the award for Best Special Event with the Department of Parks and Recreation for 2010. In October, CERT members participated in a multi-agency exercise to test the City's emergency response to a simulated mass casualty incident.

CERT volunteers participate in a 10-week training program in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response skills 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.

The CERT program is a collaborative effort between OEM and the New York City Police and Fire Departments. CERTs are now active in 46 of the City's 59 Community Boards. OEM hopes to install teams in every community board by December, 2009.

For more information about the CERT program, or if you are interested in becoming a CERT volunteer, call 311 or visit www.nyc.gov/cert.

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