

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**#21-17**

**NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT HONORS COMMUNITY EMERGENCY  
RESPONSE TEAM MEMBERS WHO WENT ABOVE AND BEYOND IN 2016**

On Wednesday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, in celebration of National Volunteer Week, the New York City Emergency Management Department honored 40 Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members who volunteered over 100 hours of service in 2016 with both presidential and mayoral volunteer service awards. CERT members are dedicated volunteers who help to prepare their neighbors and communities for different types of disasters.

“Whether it’s organizing events to prepare their neighbors for emergencies, assisting during large community events, or responding to emergency events throughout the five boroughs, CERT volunteers are an invaluable resource for their neighborhoods,” **said NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito**. “Those being honored today are the best of the best, individuals who time and again go above and beyond to serve their communities.”

John Tidona, Team Chief for the Staten Island Port Richmond CERT team, was among those honored at Wednesday’s event. As chief of the only CERT team on Staten Island, John keeps busy. The team participates in nearly every large scale event on the island including the Five Borough Bike Tour, NYC Marathon, the Tour de Staten Island, holiday events, and over 30 emergency preparedness events each year.

“It’s important for us to be prepared,” John Tidona said. “Staten Island has a different demographic than the other boroughs. Most of it is residential, and most of it is spread out. We have a lot of floods, we have brush fires and we have traffic that is unparalleled.”

According to Tidona, the Port Richmond CERT team is involved in assisting in the search for nearly every missing person on the island.

“Staten Island doesn’t have the same resources as the other boroughs, so our first responders get taxed quickly and that’s where we try to come in and help them,” John Tidona said.

“Because we’re an island...you can’t get on or off without a bridge,” said team member and fellow honoree Denise Palermo. “We could be on our own, so we prepare for that.”

A total of nine Port Richmond Staten Island CERT members were recognized for their service at Wednesday’s first annual event in recognition of volunteers who go above and beyond in serving their communities.

The New York City CERT program started in 2003 with 106 volunteers. There are currently more than 1,300 credentialed CERT volunteers representing more than 50 teams throughout New York City.

For more information about the CERT program, or if you are interested in becoming a CERT volunteer, call 311 or visit [NYC.gov/EmergencyManagement](http://NYC.gov/EmergencyManagement)

-30-

**CAPTIONS:**

NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito and NYC Service's Chief Service Officer Paula Gavin honor Staten Island Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members who served over 100 hours in 2016. *From left:* Roberta Thomas, Chief Service Officer Paula Gavin, Denise Palermo, John Tidona, Christine CrouchBurke, Commissioner Joseph Esposito.

NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito and NYC Service's Chief Service Officer Paula Gavin honor Staten Island CERT Team Chief John Tidona. Tidona spent over 100 hours in 2016 serving Staten Island communities. *From left:* Chief Service Officer Paula Gavin, John Tidona, Commissioner Joseph Esposito.

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