

**For Immediate Release**

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## **THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IS NOT STOPPING NEW YORKERS FROM HELPING THEIR NEIGHBORS**

*New York City Emergency Management is hosting virtual sessions to train the next group of community emergency volunteers*

**November 24, 2020** – A group of New Yorkers is gearing up to help their neighbors during the pandemic. Forty volunteers from across the city are participating in virtual training sessions in disaster preparedness and emergency response. Their goal: to become the next group of Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers. The New York City Emergency Management Department kicked off this five-week virtual training on November 2 to equip volunteers with the necessary skills to support their family and friends during an emergency.

“CERT volunteers play a pivotal role in preparing community members for a host of different emergencies, and it’s important that we continue to train volunteers during the pandemic,” said **NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Deanne Criswell**. “The unprecedented challenges presented by COVID-19 have forced us all to make major adaptations to our lives. This cycle’s virtual basic training sessions are providing volunteers with the information and resources they need to make a difference in their communities.”

The 37th CERT basic training cycle includes 10-sessions in disaster preparedness and emergency response, equipping volunteers with lessons in basic fire safety, search and rescue, traffic management, and first aid and triage. New York City Emergency Management is hosting the virtual training program along with instructors from the New York City Fire Department (FDNY), and New York City Police Department (NYPD) Auxiliary Unit.

“The men and women who volunteer their time to become CERT members are a true asset to their communities, now more than ever as our city continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic,” said **Fire Commissioner Daniel A. Nigro**. “The FDNY is proud to continue to take part in this important program and train New Yorkers to step up and support their city when needed most.”

During the last training cycle, NYC Emergency Management transitioned CERT basic training classes virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Sholom Lanau, a Williamsburg resident, is one of the 40 New Yorkers to participate in the remote sessions.

“The opportunity to complete the training virtually is helpful for me personally because I can do it from the comfort and safety of my home,” **Lanau** said. “Our instructors from NYC Emergency Management, NYPD, and FDNY are extremely helpful and provide detailed responses to all of our questions.”

Since its launch, NYC CERT has responded to a host of emergencies, and local teams can 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. Lanau has encouraged his friends to continue to find ways to help their community.

“My friends and I are already involved in community volunteer organizations, so I encouraged them to sign up for the CERT program as well. It’s important to continue to learn more about how we can help our neighbors during these tough times.”

### **Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) in New York City**

The New York City CERT program started in 2003 with 106 volunteers. Today, there are more than 1,200 credentialed CERT volunteers throughout the five boroughs. NYC CERT volunteers participate in a 10-session basic training program where they receive instruction from active members of the FDNY, 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.

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

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