

For Immediate Release
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THIRTY-SIX VOLUNTEERS JOIN LOCAL COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS (CERTs) SERVING NYC NEIGHBORHOODS

NYC Emergency Management Department recognizes the first class to complete CERT training virtually

[Click here](#) to view the recorded virtual graduation ceremony

September 16, 2020 – The New York City Emergency Management Department is adding a new group of volunteers to the city’s Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs). Thirty-six volunteers graduated Tuesday from the training program and will now support their communities by assisting City agencies and partner organizations that prepare for and respond to emergencies.

“These 36 CERT graduates didn’t back down when the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted their learning, and this perseverance is a testament to their commitment to helping New Yorkers during trying times,” said **New York City Emergency Management Commissioner Deanne Criswell**. “I have no doubt these graduates are ready, willing, and prepared to assist their communities in an emergency.”

Tuesday’s graduating class is the first to complete the CERT program virtually. The graduates began their training in February and then finished the curriculum virtually this summer after NYC Emergency Management restructured training classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The CERT training cycle included 10 sessions in disaster preparedness and emergency response and equips volunteers with lessons in basic fire safety, search and rescue, traffic management, and first aid and triage. Thirteen of Tuesday’s graduates will join CERT teams in the Bronx, 11 will join teams in Queens, seven will join Manhattan teams, and five will join teams in Brooklyn. The New York City CERT program launched in 2003.

“It’s clear to me that CERT draws people to its program who are eager to help and people who truly want to be invested in their community,” said **graduate Laura Peluso**.

Peluso, a museum conservator and teacher from East Harlem, had prior experience in emergency planning for museum collections at her job. She chose to join her local CERT team to expand her knowledge of personal preparedness and to serve her community in Harlem.

“I was so humbled by the many years of experience that were in the class. I learned a lot from the FDNY and NYPD instructors as well as from my fellow classmates during the training,” **Peluso** said. “CERT is a great way to get to know your neighbors.”

“In the Rockaways I live right across the street from the water, and I know how important it is to be ready in case of an emergency,” said **graduate Gene Philemon**. “CERT has really taught me the importance of teamwork during emergencies, as well as having a support network and helping each other.”

Philemon is an airport terminal manager and plans to apply his training at both work and home.

“I look forward to helping others make an emergency plan, pack a Go-Bag, or learn what hurricane evacuation zone they live in,” **Philemon** said.

During the ceremony, New York City Emergency Management presented Manhattan Division 3, District 6 CERT with the NYC CERT Deployment award. The agency also presented Bronx Division 1, District 3 with the NYC CERT Ambassador award. The awards recognize the teams' generous commitment of time, support and inspiration to its community, along with exceptional focus on expanding partnerships within its community.

NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Deane Criswell presided over the virtual graduation ceremony, along with FDNY Deputy Chief James Brosi, and NYPD Deputy Inspector Emmanuel Gonzalez. The three leaders presented the CERT Awards and welcomed the new graduates into the New York City Community Emergency Response Team program.

Watch the full graduation [here](#).

To sign up for the training, visit [NYC.gov/EmergencyManagement](https://nyc.gov/EmergencyManagement).

Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) in New York City

The New York City CERT program started in 2003 with 106 volunteers. The new CERT graduates will join more than 1,200 credentialed CERT volunteers representing more than 50 teams throughout New York City. The 36 graduates received training from a number of the City's highly trained emergency responders, including 13 FDNY instructors, seven FDNY/EMS instructors, seven NYPD instructors, and nine NYC Emergency Management liaisons.

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).

Census 2020

The 2020 Census is ending on September 30, and it is critical that all New Yorkers are counted. New York City stands to lose billions of dollars in federal aid every single year for schools, hospitals, health clinics, affordable housing, transportation, and more, as well as our representation in Congress and in Albany if we do not achieve a complete count.

The census is easy, safe, and confidential. It can be completed online or by phone. It is just 10 simple questions that can be answered in under 10 minutes. By law, all responses are completely confidential and cannot be shared with anyone — not immigration, not the police, or your landlord. There are no questions about immigration, citizenship, criminal history, or income. Go to my2020census.gov or call 844-330-2020 to complete your census today. New York City's future depends on it.

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