
For Immediate Release**#13-23**

NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT HOSTS DISASTER SIMULATION EXERCISE FOR COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (CERT) VOLUNTEERS

May 2, 2023 – The New York City Emergency Management Department hosted a disaster simulation exercise for Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers at the New York City Fire Department’s Training Academy on Randall’s Island, on Saturday, April 29. Instructors from NYC Emergency Management, FDNY, and NYPD tested and reviewed the volunteers’ emergency preparedness and response skills in fire suppression, search and rescue, medical operations, and management during an emergency simulation.

“Volunteers with Community Emergency Response Teams are an important asset to New York City’s emergency responders,” said **New York City Emergency Management Commissioner Zach Iscol**. “Simulation exercises allow these volunteers to practice what they learned in class, so they are better prepared to assist during an emergency. And as we celebrate 20 years of CERT, we are extremely proud of the New Yorkers who generously give their time and energy to participate in our programs as they serve their communities across the five boroughs.”

NYC CERT is a national volunteer program that came to New York City after the September 2001 terrorists attack and has empowered New Yorkers to assist their communities during emergency and non-emergency events. The New York City CERT program started in 2003 with 106 volunteers. Today, there are 24 teams of credentialed volunteers covering all 59 NYC community boards.

“NYC CERT volunteers are a tremendous asset to NYC Emergency Management. This year we are celebrating the successes of our volunteers over the last 20 years. Our volunteers bring their ideas, energy, community connections, and compassion into every aspect of their volunteer work,” said **New York City Emergency Management Deputy Commissioner Community Engagement Herman Schaffer**. “Our continued partnerships with FDNY and NYPD help provide valuable skills and training. These opportunities enhance our readiness to assist during emergencies.”

The disaster simulation exercise caps off the latest CERT training cycle designed to prepare community members to assist first responders during an emergency. During the exercise, 80 CERT volunteers from across the City practiced their roles in several simulated disaster scenarios including extinguishing live fires, executing basic triage assignments, and assisting and removing “trapped victims.” Participants worked closely with instructors from the NYPD, FDNY, and NYC Emergency Management, who provided professional training and evaluation during the training cycle.

“For the past two decades, Community Emergency Response Teams have done invaluable work for New Yorkers, and the FDNY is proud to partner with NYC Emergency Management in

training the teams. CERT teams provide critical assistance to our city's response to major emergencies, and the value of these volunteers is immeasurable. Being prepared for any kind of emergency makes us stronger and safer as a city, and we thank the teams for their service and time in keeping us ready at all times," **said Fire Commissioner Laura Kavanagh.**

"NYC Community Emergency Response Team volunteers play a vital role in the public safety and security of our city," **said NYPD Police Commissioner Keechant L. Sewell.** "These training exercises are an important part of CERT member readiness and response – because we know that thorough preparation makes all the difference when lives are at risk. Thank you to NYC Emergency Management, the FDNY, and every CERT instructor, trainer, and staff member for their work in this critical program."

Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) in New York City

The New York City CERT program started in 2003 with 106 volunteers. Over the years, with more than 265k hours of volunteer work, CERT members have also assisted efforts outside of New York City. In 2010, CERT staff members traveled to Haiti following the impact of the earthquake to teach CERT preparedness, and in 2018 after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico, they supported donations operations with the NYCEM Logistics teams. Prior to the Covid health emergency, CERT members assisted with flyer distribution in 2015 and 2016 for Ebola and Legionnaire's disease respectively. NYC CERT volunteers participate in a 11-session basic training program where they receive instruction from active members of the FDNY, FDNY-EMS, NYPD, and NYC Emergency Management.

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

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