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**OEM GRADUATES 187 COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (CERT)
VOLUNTEERS, LARGEST CLASS IN THE PROGRAM'S HISTORY**

*Fourth Annual John D. Solomon Emergency Preparedness Award
Presented to Wali Abdun-Noor, CERT Team Chief for Bronx 6*

December 16, 2013 – Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Commissioner Joseph F. Bruno today joined Deputy Inspector Phylis Byrne, Commanding Officer of the NYPD Auxiliary Police Section, and FDNY First Deputy Commissioner Daniel Schaknai in presiding over a graduation ceremony for 187 new Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers. The largest group of graduates in the program's history, the new CERT volunteers include two classes from the first-ever CERT summer cycle and five classes that trained during the fall 2013 session. All 187 graduates completed an intensive, 10-week training program in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response skills. The CERT graduation took place at Con Edison headquarters in Manhattan.

“Since the CERT program was created 10 years ago, CERT volunteers have become an invaluable partners in the preparedness and safety of our communities,” said Commissioner Bruno. “Today’s CERT graduates join a prestigious network of committed volunteers that support our city in the times when help is needed most.”

“The FDNY is such a strong supporter of the CERT program because we’ve seen how much aid CERT members can offer when disaster strikes,” said Fire Commissioner Salvatore J. Cassano. “From helping notify residents to evacuate prior to Superstorm Sandy, to their support at shelters, to their efforts to help the Department clear downed trees after the storm – the work of CERT teams was outstanding. They are a true asset to the city.”

During the graduation, Commissioner Bruno presented Wali Abdun-Noor, a Bronx CERT Team Chief, with the fourth annual John D. Solomon NYC CERT Award for Exemplary Service in Emergency Preparedness Education. In 2011, Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Bruno introduced the award to honor the late John D. Solomon, an active member of his CERT team on Manhattan’s Upper East Side. Solomon was dedicated to raising awareness of the need to prepare our families, neighbors, workplaces, and communities for all hazards. The John D. Solomon NYC CERT Award for Exemplary Service in Emergency Preparedness Education is presented annually to a CERT member who embodies John’s enthusiasm for volunteerism and purposeful engagement to make their communities better prepared for emergencies. Members of the Solomon family joined Commissioner Bruno in presenting this year’s award to CERT Team Chief Wali Abdun-Noor.

(more)

An active CERT member since 2006, Wali Abdun Noor is Team Chief for Bronx Community Board 6. He is very involved with emergency preparedness education across the South Bronx and Northern Manhattan. Working with the Manhattan Community Board 10S team, Wali helped to run a series of public service announcements about emergency preparedness on the radio station WHCR, 90.3 FM. He was also an organizer of the Harlem Emergency Summit, which brought together community leaders and residents in a day-long conference to discuss and promote emergency preparedness in September 2013.

Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) in New York City




The New York City CERT program started in 2003 with 106 volunteers. Today, the City has 54 CERT teams and more than 1,500 volunteers representing all five boroughs. New York City CERT volunteers participate in a 10-week training program in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response skills taught by active and retired members of the Police and Fire Departments. After completing training that includes lessons in fire safety, search and rescue, first aid and triage, CERTs support their local communities by assisting City agencies that prepare for and respond to emergencies. CERT volunteers also work to educate their communities about emergency preparedness through OEM's Ready New York campaign.

The CERT concept was first developed in 1985 by the City of Los Angeles Fire Department, which recognized citizens would likely be on their own during the early stages of a disaster. The Los Angeles CERT training proved to be so beneficial that FEMA decided the program should be made available to communities across the United States. In 1994, FEMA and the Los Angeles Fire Department expanded the CERT curriculum. And, in 2003, FEMA's Citizen Corps Council adopted CERT as a primary way to encourage people to volunteer to make their communities safer, stronger and better prepared to respond to emergencies. There are currently more than 3,500 active CERT programs in the United States.

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

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