
For Immediate Release

#30-19

**STATEN ISLAND COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (CERT) HOSTS
SEARCH AND RESCUE EXERCISE AT SEAVIEW REHABILITATION CENTER**

April 3, 2019 — The Port Richmond Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members put their training to the test during a simulated exercise in Staten Island on Saturday, March 30. The emergency scenario the team practiced was an earthquake that triggered a search and rescue at the old Community Board 2 building on the Seaview Rehabilitation Center campus.

“We like to test our core capabilities [as CERT members] so that we know exactly what our strengths and weaknesses are and access what areas we need to continue training,” **Steven Clohessy, Staten Island borough coordinator**, said.

During the exercise, the earthquake’s destruction was evident. Live actors, mannequins, boxes, tables, and chairs were scattered throughout the building, and a simulated fire burned in the distance. CERT members began their response by forming a command structure. Next, individuals were divided into groups and deployed to conduct preliminary searches in surrounding buildings, noting which buildings were safe to enter. Then the volunteers regrouped at base camp — in the parking lot adjacent to the building — and were redeployed by their elected CERT leader or “incident commander” to begin searching for survivors. Volunteers escorted live actors deemed “walking wounded” to basic medical triage and used mannequins to practice transporting injured victims on stretchers. Additional search and rescue practices continued throughout the day.

CERTs from all five boroughs were on hand Saturday, along with local Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, who earned their Emergency Preparedness Patch/Merit Badge for their participation. About 25 CERT members and six scouts participated in the exercise.

“Thankfully, we do not get the opportunity to put a lot of these trainings to real life use, and these are disciplines that if you don’t use them, you lose them,” **Clohessy** said. “Hands-on exercises like this help create an atmosphere where people want to keep coming back to the CERT team.”

NYC Emergency Management is looking for volunteers for its upcoming CERT training cycle, which will begin in Staten Island on May 8. NYC CERT volunteers participate in a 10-session basic training program where they receive instruction from active members of the NYPD, FDNY 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. If you are 18 or older and you want to join NYC CERT, please visit: www.CERTvolunteer.nyc or call 311.

“Everyone needs to have preparedness training, for your family and yourself,” according to **Clohessy**. “If you join a CERT team, whatever your background, whatever your passion, where ever you want to go and whatever you want to do, we can fit you in. CERT takes all comers and everybody brings a different gift to the team.”

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 50 CERT teams and 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 NYPD, FDNY 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. After completing basic training, new members join local CERTs to support their communities by assisting City agencies that prepare for and respond to emergencies.

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CAPTIONS:

S.I. CERT_1: Staten Island Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Borough Coordinator Steven Clohessy (*center*) prepares CERT volunteers for a search and rescue exercise on the Seaview Rehabilitation Center campus on Saturday, March 30.

S.I. CERT_2: Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers search for “survivors” during a search and rescue exercise on the Seaview Rehabilitation Center campus in Staten Island on Saturday, March 30.

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