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**#5-16**

**NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT HOSTS GRADUATION CEREMONY FOR 78  
COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (CERT) VOLUNTEERS**

**January 27, 2016** – New York City Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito, NYPD Deputy Inspector Phylis Byrne, and FDNY Assistant Chief James Hodgens presided over a graduation ceremony for 78 Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers. The graduation was held Wednesday evening in the Emergency Operation Center (EOC) of NYC Emergency Management headquarters at 165 Cadman Plaza in Brooklyn. This group of 78 is the 25<sup>th</sup> CERT graduating class to have completed a 10-week training program in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response skills that included lessons in fire safety, search and rescue, traffic management, and first aid and triage.

“We’re lucky to have a team of volunteers who are so dedicated to helping others that they were willing to brave the cold in historic levels of snow last weekend to shovel out fire hydrants and help neighbors with tasks large and small,” said Commissioner Esposito. “From mobilizing volunteers to help with community clean-up efforts to helping elderly neighbors navigate slushy sidewalks, CERT volunteers are always here to help.”

During the ceremony, the 2015 John D. Solomon Award for Exemplary Service in Emergency Preparedness Education was presented to John Tidona of Staten Island-Port Richmond CERT. As the team’s chief, Mr. Tidona has forged multiple partnerships with numerous organizations and elected officials across the borough. Mr. Tidona’s dedication has equipped Staten Islanders with the necessary knowledge to prepare their families, friends and businesses for emergencies. His team members have followed his example. Port Richmond volunteers serve the whole of Staten Island and provide extensive outreach to their communities by working closely with NYC Emergency Management’s Ready New York program. Mr. Tidona and his team have been at the forefront of ensuring that Staten Islanders are prepared for emergencies.

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

The New York City CERT program started in 2003 with 106 volunteers. The new Cycle 25 CERT graduates will join more than 2,000 credentialed CERT volunteers representing more than 50 teams throughout New York City and will be bolstering the member numbers of nine teams in Brooklyn, nine teams in the Bronx, nine teams in Manhattan, six teams in Queens, and the Staten Island team. The 78 graduates received training from a number of the city’s highly trained emergency responders, including 19 FDNY instructors, 10 FDNY/EMS instructors, 7 NYPD instructors, and 15 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 [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov).

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