



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT HOLDS GRADUATION  
CEREMONY FOR 121 COMMUNITY EMERGENCY  
RESPONSE TEAM VOLUNTEERS**

*First Ever CERT Summer Class Will Begin Training in June*

**Tuesday, May 21, 2013** – New York City Office of Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph F. Bruno today joined Fire Commissioner Sal Cassano and Deputy Inspector Phylis Byrne, Commanding Officer of the NYPD Auxiliary Police Section, in presiding over a graduation ceremony for 121 Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers. In February, the volunteers began a 10-week training program in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response skills that included lessons in fire safety, search and rescue, first aid and triage. The new CERT graduates will join more than 1,500 active CERT volunteers representing 54 teams throughout New York City. And, with an increase in the number of New Yorkers looking to join the CERT program, the first CERT summer class will begin in June to train an additional 50 volunteers in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response.

“The graduating CERT volunteers join a cadre of individuals who selflessly serve their communities and offer critical support during times of emergency,” said Commissioner Bruno. “I would like to thank the graduating class for their commitment to their neighbors, their assistance to the City’s first responders, and their dedication to their communities at large.”

“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. “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.”

***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, 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.

New York City CERT members have a demonstrated history of assisting the City with response and preparedness outreach. Recently, more than 600 CERT members logged over 20,000 hours of volunteer service during Hurricane Sandy. For example, prior to the storm CERT members on Staten Island canvassed neighborhoods in Zone A reminding residents that they were in an evacuation zone. During the storm CERT members supported the Healthcare Facility Evacuation Center by staffing its call center at OEM. Members also staffed shelters, OEM's logistic center, and the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). After the storm, CERT members reported to distribution sites to hand out water and food. They also assisted with pumping fuel from tankers at Floyd Bennett Field and in the Rockaways to get fuel to emergency vehicles and storm-damaged areas.

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.

The next round of CERT training will begin in June. Applications for the fall 2013 CERT training session will be available in July 2013. 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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