



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

02-09

Tuesday, February 24, 2009

**OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT HOLDS GRADUATION
CEREMONY FOR 168 COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM
VOLUNTEERS**

With New Teams the City Now Has More Than 1,000 Active CERT Volunteers

New York City Office of Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Bruno today joined Deputy Mayor Edward Skyler, Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly, FDNY Chief of Department Salvatore Cassano and other City officials in presiding over a graduation ceremony for 168 Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers. The volunteers make up eight CERTs that graduated after completing an intensive, 11-week training program in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response skills. With today's graduation, the City now has more than 1,000 active CERT volunteers.

"In his State of the City speech last month, Mayor Bloomberg announced an ambitious plan to promote volunteerism and engage more New Yorkers in public service," said Deputy Mayor Skyler. "By supporting first responders and preparing their communities for emergencies, these CERT graduates are great examples of New Yorkers who have chosen to spend their time giving back to the City."

"This year marks the sixth anniversary of the CERT program, and each time we activate a team I am impressed by the dedication these volunteers have for their communities," said Commissioner Bruno. "Whether they are asked to staff a reception center during a building vacate or deliver ice to their neighbors during a power outage, CERT volunteers have shown time and time again that they are ready to help out at a moment's notice, and we are extremely grateful for their service."

"Participation in CERT is more than responsible citizenship; it's literally a life-saving decision," said Commissioner Kelly. "Tonight's graduates join a group of well-informed, conscientious and vigilant volunteers who are expertly prepared to serve their communities with everything from basic first aid to terrorism awareness. I join Deputy Mayor Skyler, Commissioner Bruno and Chief Cassano in congratulating and commending them on setting an example for all New Yorkers."

"Today's CERT graduation is yet another example of New Yorkers coming together to help the City when disaster strikes," said Commissioner Scoppetta. "Since the program's inception six years ago, the City's CERT volunteers have been instrumental in assisting first responders during

emergency situations. We are all grateful for their dedication and the time they have sacrificed in helping us to keep New York City safe.”

CERT volunteers participate in an 11-week training program in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response skills taught by active and retired personnel from the Police and Fire Departments. After completing training that includes lessons in fire safety, search and rescue, and disaster medical operations, CERTs support their local communities by assisting City agencies that prepare for and respond to disasters. CERT volunteers also work to educate their communities about emergency preparedness through OEM’s Ready New York campaign.

CERT volunteers most recently assisted emergency responders at a major fire in the Bronx and at a warming center in Manhattan. CERT volunteers were also deployed to help the City locate the mysterious maple syrup odor reported in Manhattan, the Bronx and Queens last month.

Last year, CERTs distributed ice to Brooklyn residents during a power outage and delivered drinking water to Upper East Side residents who were displaced by two construction accidents. CERTs were also activated last year for vacate orders in Williamsburg and Lower Manhattan. In 2007 CERT members in Far Rockaway were among the first to arrive at a six-alarm fire in their neighborhood. Their familiarity with the residents and local resources helped speed up efforts to provide food and shelter to evacuees.

In addition to assisting first responders during emergencies, CERTs play an important role in emergency training exercises and community events. Last summer CERT members were deployed for HURREX 2008, a full-scale, multi-agency field exercise to test the deployment of the City’s emergency supply stockpile and the setup of shelters.

The CERT program is a collaborative effort between OEM and the New York City Police and Fire Departments. CERTs are now active in 46 of the City’s 59 Community Boards. OEM hopes to install teams in every community board by December, 2009.

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

CONTACT:

Chris Gilbride/Seth Andrews (OEM)

(718) 422-4888