
For Immediate Release

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**NEW YORK CITY COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (NYC CERT)
PROGRAM WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS ON ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR**

New graduates are joining more than 600 CERT active members dedicated to helping their communities during emergencies

April 5, 2023 – The New York City Emergency Management Department welcomed 24 new Community Emergency Response Team (NYC CERT) volunteers to its program during a hybrid graduation ceremony on Monday, April 3. The graduation also served as the kick-off event to the program’s year-long 20th anniversary celebration. The NYC CERT basic training cycle includes 11 sessions that focus on disaster preparedness and emergency response, equipping volunteers with skills in basic fire safety, search and rescue, traffic management, and first aid and triage. NYC Emergency Management offered the training program with instructors from the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) and New York City Police Department (NYPD) Auxiliary Unit.

“We’re very proud to welcome another class of graduating volunteers into our CERT family. These volunteers are everyday New Yorkers committed to helping their neighborhoods, borough, and city at a moment’s notice. CERT members answer the call to serve under all-weather conditions regardless of the emergency, and that is a testament to their character and dedication to public service,” said **New York City Emergency Management Commissioner Zach Iscol**.

During the ceremony, the Carlos Nieves NYC CERT Team Award for Excellence in Deployment and Emergency Response was presented to Brooklyn Division 5. The award recognizes a division’s generous commitment of time, support, and inspiration to its community. The award is named after former American Red Cross volunteer and CERT member Carlos Nieves who passed away in 2017 while en route to a volunteer assignment. Brooklyn Division 5 is responsible for volunteers efforts in: Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights, Fort Hamilton, Bath Beach, Gravesend, Mapleton, Bensonhurst, Coney Island, Brighton Beach, and Seagate.

“It is an honor to receive this award, and a credit to the hard work and dedication of all my team members in Brooklyn Division 5 to the communities we serve,” said Division Chief for CERT Brooklyn Division 5 Craig Kligfeld, who has been a CERT member since 2012. “I continue to volunteer because it brings me joy knowing that I’m helping people.”

This graduating class joins a group of 638 current members. CERT is a national volunteer program that came to New York City after the September 2001 terrorists attack and has empowered New Yorkers to assist their communities during emergency and non-emergency events. In NYC, CERT volunteers have answered the call to assist with water and food distribution in neighborhoods affected by Hurricane Sandy and Hurricane Ida, staffed service centers and assisted with escorts after building collapses, like the East Village building collapse in 2015. The CERT vest was visible at many subway stations during Covid, as they were

supporting the MTA Mask Force to provide masks and hand sanitizer to commuters during rush hours.

Over the years, with more than 265,000 hours of volunteer work, CERT members have also assisted efforts outside of New York City. In 2010, CERT staff members traveled to Haiti following the impact of the earthquake to teach CERT preparedness, and in 2017 after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico, they supported donations operations with the NYCEM Logistics teams. Prior to the Covid health emergency, CERT members assisted with flyer distribution in 2015 and 2016 for Ebola and Legionnaire's disease respectively.

To celebrate its 20th anniversary and its volunteers, NYCEM will host various events throughout the year, including recording podcast episodes in English and Spanish with CERT members, a large-scale exercise at Randall's Island on April 29th, and a picnic for volunteers at Gracie Mansion in the fall.

"This year we are celebrating our 20th anniversary of the NYC CERT program. Since 2003 we have seen the program grow and have witnessed the impact that our volunteers have had on their communities during both large and small emergencies. I want to welcome these new graduates into this amazing program and look forward to working with them to help make their communities safer," said **New York City Emergency Management Deputy Commissioner Community Engagement Herman Schaffer**.

"Members of the Community Emergency Response Team have played a pivotal public-safety role in our city for two decades," **NYPD Commissioner Keechant L. Sewell said**. "These dedicated volunteers understand that a strong community depends on all of us – working together – supporting and caring for our neighbors. I want to thank NYC Emergency Management, the FDNY, and every CERT instructor, trainer, and staff member for their selfless commitment to public service."

"For the past 20 years, Community Emergency Response Teams have provided an invaluable service to New Yorkers, and the FDNY is proud to be a longtime partner with NYC Emergency Management in this effort. The program is a critical part of our city's response to major emergencies, and the value of these volunteers cannot be measured. The training they receive means our neighbors and our communities are prepared and strong. We appreciate the graduates, and thank them for their service. We look forward to the work they will do to support our city," said **New York City Fire Department Commissioner Laura Kavanagh**.

Most recently, NYC CERT members have responded to both planned and unplanned emergency deployments. These deployments included: the Dyker Heights lights deployment, the Polar Bear plunge in Coney Island, the Lunar New Year Deployment in Bensonhurst, the annual Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE) survey deployment in collaboration with Department of Social Services (DSS), Human Resources Administration (HRA) and Department of Homeless Services (DHS), Senior Citizen's Caribbean Valentine's experience and most recently the Saint Patrick's Day parade deployments in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, and Bayside Queens. CERT

members were also able to support the Flash Flood and Winter Weather Plan activations by measuring snowfall and clearing catch basins to prevent flooding of local streets.

CERT members also work year-round to ensure their communities are prepared for emergencies, providing information and resources to assist residents with creating an emergency plan for their friends and family. NYC Emergency Management hosts CERT training cycles three times a year.

Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) in New York City

The New York City CERT program started in 2003 with 106 volunteers. Today, there are 24 divisions of credentialed volunteers covering all 59 NYC community boards. NYC CERT volunteers participate in a 11-session basic training program where they receive instruction from active members of the FDNY, FDNY-EMS, NYPD, and NYC Emergency Management. For more information about the program, or if you are interested in becoming a volunteer, call 311 or visit NYC.gov/cert.

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