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**OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT HOLDS GRADUATION
CEREMONY FOR 89 COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM
VOLUNTEERS**

With New Graduates the City Now Has More Than 1,500 Active CERT Volunteers

New York City Office of Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph F. Bruno today joined Fire First Deputy Commissioner Dan Shacknai and Deputy Inspector Phylis Byrne, Commanding Officer of the NYPD Auxiliary Police Section, in presiding over a graduation ceremony for 89 Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers. The volunteers undergo a 10-week training program in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response skills. With today's graduation, the City now has more than 1,500 active CERT volunteers.

"CERT volunteers are a tremendous asset to New York City," said Commissioner Bruno. "From helping their communities prepare for emergencies to serving their neighbors in times of crisis, CERT volunteers help to keep our communities safe."

"More than an example of responsible citizenship, CERT has the potential to be a real lifesaver. As both police commissioner and a resident of New York City, home to the largest CERT program in the country, I am thankful for all CERT volunteers who take the time to be a part of this valuable program. They support first responders and set an example for the entire community."

Fire Commissioner Salvatore J. Cassano said, "The FDNY is a strong supporter of the Community Emergency Response Team program because we know first hand how valuable it is to New York City. At events like last year's World Police and Fire Games and during emergencies when they are needed the most, these dedicated, highly trained volunteers always step forward to help their fellow New Yorkers."

The New York City CERT program started in 2003 with 106 volunteers. Today, the City has 57 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 members of the Police and Fire Departments. After completing training that includes lessons in fire safety, search and rescue, traffic control, first aid and triage, 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. In April, CERT members provided search and rescue

assistance during the Staten Island brush fire. This spring, they were also deployed to assist with important events like the Five Boro Bike Tour, Autism Walks, and the Brooklyn Half Marathon.

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.

In New York City, the CERT program is a collaborative effort between the Office of Emergency Management, the NYPD, and the FDNY. 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.

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