



Union City Fire Department CERT UPDATE AND REORGANIZATION



TO: All Community Emergency Response Team Members

FROM: Carol Dutra Vernaci, CERT Coordinator

DATE: February 3, 2010

SUBJECT: CERT Update and Reorganization.

As the new CERT Coordinator, I am asking for your participation and attendance to a very important meeting to be held on February 20, 2010, rear of Fire Station #1 Training Room. These are very exciting times at UC CERT. We will introduce the new Board of Directors, CERT By-Laws, our budget and begin to plan, organize and begin to set the groundwork for our future program. Due to work obligations, I will not be able to attend the meeting; however, I have met with Fire Chief Carlos Rodriguez and he will deliver my message and run the meeting.

Below please find some background on CERT. I'm looking forward to working with all of you and earning your cooperation and involvement.

BACKGROUND

The Community Emergency Response Team concept was developed and implemented by the Los Angeles City Fire Department (LAFD) in 1985. The Whittier Narrows earthquake in 1987 underscored the area-wide threat of a major disaster in California. Further, it confirmed the need for training civilians to meet their immediate needs. As a result, the LAFD created the Disaster Preparedness Division with the purpose of training citizens, private and government employees.

The training program that LAFD initiated makes good sense and furthers the process of citizens understanding their responsibility in preparing for disaster. It also increases their ability to safely help themselves, their family and their neighbors. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recognized the importance of preparing citizens. This is when the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) and the National Fire Academy adopted and expanded the CERT materials believing them applicable to all hazards.

CERT course training will benefit any citizen who takes it and render him/her better prepared to respond to and cope with the aftermath of a disaster. Additionally, if a community wants to supplement its response capability after a disaster, civilians can be recruited and trained as neighborhood, business, and government teams that, in essence, will be auxiliary responders. These groups can provide immediate assistance to victims in their area, organize spontaneous volunteers who have not had the training, and collect disaster intelligence that will assist professional responders with prioritization and allocation of resources following a disaster. Since 1993 when this training was made available nationally by FEMA, communities all over the country have conducted CERT training.

UNION CITY CERT

Initiated in May 2001, The Union City Fire Department Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program was developed informally. The goal was to create a well-trained civilian emergency volunteer force to assist the City and citizens during disasters. The time has come to reorganize and formalize CERT into an effective citizen-based volunteer force officially recognized by the City Council. On October 4, 2008, brainstorming began with active CERT volunteers to explore the possibility of developing an organizational CERT Model that under the direction of the Fire Chief will represent CERT adequately, keep the program functioning into the future and empower a Board of peers under the guidance and support of the Fire Chief. On December 15, 2008, we introduced five (5) basic goals to launch Union City CERT into the future. These goals are:

- To cease functioning in a reactive mode and create a formal track to elevate CERT into a properly managed volunteer organization.
- Assemble a volunteer CERT Planning Task Force and professionally train them on how to conduct and develop a Strategic Plan for CERT.
- Create an initial Phase 1 Strategic Plan that addresses root goals and by-laws until such time a CERT Board can be established.
- Seek adoption and recognition of CERT as a formal volunteer functional force of the City to assist Public Safety and the City's Emergency Operation Center during a natural or man-made disaster.
- Create a separate budget line item for CERT within the Fire Department budget.

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- January 2009 - Created a CERT Planning Task Force
- February 2009 – The Task Force attended formal training on Strategic Planning.
- February – March 2009 - Developed Phase-1 of the Strategic Plan.
- June – September 2009 - Developed Draft By-Laws
- June 2009 – City Manager approves a stand-alone line item in the FD budget for CERT.
- June 2009 - City Council funds CERT for fiscal years 09-10 and 10-11 utilizing Measure UU funding (\$25K each year).
- April 2009 - Introduction of CERT to the New Haven Unified School District and offered CERT classes to NHUSD staff.
- June – September 2009 - Strategic Planning Task Force creates document for City Council consideration.

- November 2009 – City Council approves By-Laws and officially recognizes CERT as a City sponsored volunteer force.
- January 2010– Fire Chief appoints Board (Planning, Logistics, Training and Treasurer).
CERT Membership nominates Carol-Dutra Vernaci as UC CERT Coordinator

CONCLUSION

CERT is about readiness, people helping people, rescuer safety, and doing the greatest good for the greatest number. CERT is a positive and realistic approach to emergency and disaster situations where citizens will be initially on their own and their actions can make a difference. Through training, citizens can manage utilities and put out small fires, treat immediate basic medical aid, search for and rescue victims safely and organize themselves and spontaneous volunteers to be effective.

CERT 100% Prepared