North Carolina Community Emergency Response Teams
Standard Operating Guidelines

2021

NC CERT Program
cert@ncdps.gov

North Carolina Department of Public Safety

Emergency Management

Roy Cooper, Governor
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NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (CERT)
STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES
PROMULGATION

North Carolina Emergency Management (NCEM) is committed to enhancing the state's resiliency by actively collaborating, communicating and coordinating to prevent, mitigate, respond and recover from disasters. The purpose of the North Carolina Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG) is to offer direction to CERT programs of North Carolina in order to foster a productive and safe operation across the state.

The primary mission of the North Carolina CERT is to assist communities across the state in being self-sufficient in the aftermath of a major disaster when professional first responders are overwhelmed or unable to respond, in addition to supplementing other public safety activities. Successful response, recovery and outreach are bolstered through trained volunteers. This SOG outlines the process for implementing CERT programs, onboarding volunteers, and identifies the responsibilities of CERT Team members. In order to maintain a consistent, statewide approach, it is imperative that all volunteers acknowledge and seek to uphold the expectations detailed in this document. Not only are CERT Programs integral to increasing disaster preparedness in all communities, but also through building a network of educated volunteers with disaster response skills that together fosters a more resilient state.

North Carolina Emergency Management is committed to refining these best-practices as we respond to and learn from actual disaster and emergency experiences, planning activities, and training and exercises efforts.

In recognition of the emergency management responsibilities of North Carolina Emergency Management, I hereby promulgate the North Carolina CERT Standard Operating Guidelines.

Mike Sprayberry   6/25/2021 | 21:39:05 EDT

Michael A. Sprayberry
Director, North Carolina Emergency Management

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Mission

In keeping with United States Homeland Security initiatives, the primary mission of the North Carolina Community Emergency Response Team Program (NC CERT) is to assist communities across the state in being self-sufficient in the aftermath of a major disaster when professional first responders are overwhelmed or unable to respond. When deployed by their sponsoring agency, NC CERT volunteers can provide limited emergency response until first responders arrive, and can then continue to assist as directed.

A secondary mission of NC CERT is to provide trained volunteers to supplement first responders when additional staffing is needed for crowd or traffic control, search operations, shelter staffing, volunteer and donations management, special events, and other public safety activities.

NC CERT volunteers are trained to first help themselves and their families, then their communities, and ultimately, their state during times of emergencies and/or disasters. The training they receive allows NC CERT volunteers to perform essential functions, and to assist first responders as needed, within the scope of their training. With the goal of supplementing local response entities when needed and maintain good partnerships, it is expected that NC CERT volunteers do not self-deploy.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to establish policies and procedures for NC CERT volunteers and their training, activation, activities, and coordination with North Caroling Emergency Management (NCEM). No policy or procedure manual can anticipate every circumstance or question. As NC CERT continues to grow, the need may arise, and NC CERT reserves the right to revise, supplement, or rescind any policies, procedures, practices, or benefits from time to time as it deems appropriate, in its sole and absolute discretion. Such changes will be communicated through official channels and will be posted online. The NC CERT webpage can be located here.

Starting a CERT Program

The first step in launching a new CERT Program is to get a sponsoring agency. In North Carolina, the majority of CERT Programs are sponsored by Fire Departments, but they may also be sponsored by Police Departments, EMS Departments, County Emergency Management, workplaces, houses of worship, home owners' associations, and nonprofits (those that are registered with the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3)). Steps for starting a new CERT program:

- Register on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) website.
- The NC CERT Program Manager will be alerted by FEMA that a request has been made, and will then will reach out to the appropriate County's Office of Emergency Management for their approval of the Program.
- Before approval is granted on the FEMA website, at least five (5) members must complete *CERT Basic Training.*

Training

CERT Basic Training classes consist of approximately 21 hours of training. The lesson plan is based on FEMA's curriculum, with additions as provided by NC CERT. To be a qualified NC CERT member, an individual must complete the entire program. It is the responsibility of each CERT Program Manager to maintain records of training and team membership.

Offering *CERT Basic Training* Classes
Each CERT Program is required to offer at least one *CERT Basic Training* class every calendar year, and all *CERT Basic Training* classes must be taught by a CERT Trainer who has been certified by the NC CERT Program. If a Program cannot supply their own Trainers, they can be requested through the NC CERT Program Office at no cost. All *CERT Basic Training* classes must be advertised and recorded in TERMS.

- To request a class with Trainers, Programs may use the "CERT Class Request Form" found on page 6.
- To have a class advertised on TERMS with a Program's own Trainers, use the "CERT Class TERMS Add Request" form, found on page 7.
- Teams may choose to utilize online training that is approved by FEMA and the NC CERT Program, such as the *CERT Basic Training Class* offered by the University of Utah, which can be found at: OnlineCERT.org. Once the individuals have completed the online training and sent their certificates to cert@ncdps.gov, training for the hands-on portion will be scheduled with an NC CERT-approved CERT Trainer.

CERT Train-the-Trainer **Classes** will be offered at least three times each calendar year, once in each of the three NCEM Branches. These classes are offered only by the NC CERT Program Office. In order to be a CERT Trainer in NC, an individual must have completed *CERT Basic Training*. Graduation from the *Train-the-Trainer* class alone does not authorize an individual to teach the *CERT Basic Training* class; Trainers must be approved by the NC CERT Program Manager.

Many additional classes may be requested from the NC CERT Program Office, including but not limited to:
- *CERT Animal Response*
- *CERT Program Manager*
- *The First Ten Minutes: Patient Assessments*
- *Introduction to WebEOC*
- *Points-of-Distribution (POD) Operations*
- *SAR for CERT, an Introduction to Wilderness Search and Rescue*
- *Shelter Operations*
- *Volunteer and Donations Management*

These classes can be requested on the "Other Class Request Form," found on page 8.

NC CERT Program
Class Request

Class Requesting:	☐ Basic Training (21 hours)		☐ Train-the-Trainer (16 hours)	
Is this a new or existing CERT?	☐ New ☐ Existing			
Name of CERT:				
Sponsoring Agency:				
Name of Individual Requesting Class (Point of Contact or POC):				
POC Phone:				
POC Email:				
Name of Location for class:				
Address of Location for class:				
City, State, ZIP:				
Is this location handicap-accessible?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Maximum number of students for location:		
For maximum student participation, the room should be set up "classroom style," so that each student has a chair and a table in front of them. Can that be done at this facility?			☐ Yes ☐ No	
Is there a projector in the room?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Is there internet access?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
You will be required to provide a propane tank. Please check here to indicate that you understand this requirement.	☐ Yes ☐ No	Estimated number of students for this class:		
Is there a safe outdoor area for the burn pan demonstration/fire extinguisher training?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Do we have permission from the facility to do the burn pan demonstration/ fire extinguisher training?	☐ Yes ☐ No	
Facility Point of Contact who can grant permission for fire extinguisher training: (security, facility manager, etc.)				
Facility POC Phone:				
Facility POC Email:				
Requested Date(s) and Time(s):				
Will this class be restricted to a certain group, or open to the public?				

Once your request is processed, the class will be added in TERMS and you will get a link to share so people can register. Please do not use any external programs for processing registrations. Return this form to the NC CERT Program Manager: cert@ncdps.gov.

NC CERT Program
Class TERMS Add Request

Class Offering:	☐ Basic Training (21 hours)
Is this a new or existing CERT?	☐ New ☐ Existing
Name of CERT:	
Sponsoring Agency:	
Name of Individual Requesting Class (Point of Contact or POC):	
POC Phone & Email:	
Primary Instructor: (must have taken *CERT Train-the-Trainer*)	
Primary Instructor Phone & Email:	
Additional Instructors: (not required to have taken *CERT TTT* if Subject Matter Expert)	
Name of Location for class:	
Address of Location for class:	
City, State, ZIP:	

Is this location handicap-accessible?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Maximum number of students for location:		
Is there a safe outdoor area for the burn pan demonstration/fire extinguisher training?	☐ Yes ☐ No	Do you have permission from the facility to do the burn pan demonstration/ fire extinguisher training?	☐ Yes ☐ No	

Facility Point of Contact who can grant permission for fire extinguisher training: (security, facility manager, etc.)	
Facility POC Phone:	
Facility POC Email:	
Requested Date(s) and Time(s):	
Will this class be restricted to a certain group, or open to the public?	

Once your request is processed, the class will be added in TERMS and you will get a link to share so people can register. Please do not use any external programs for processing registrations.
Return this form to the NC CERT Program Manager: cert@ncdps.gov.

NC CERT Program
Other Class Request

Class Requesting:	☐ CERT Animal Response ☐ The First Ten Minutes ☐ Introduction to WebEOC ☐ POD Operations ☐ SAR for CERT ☐ Shelter Operations ☐ Volunteer and Donations Management ☐ Other:_____
Name of CERT:	
Sponsoring Agency:	
Name of Individual Requesting Class (Point of Contact or POC):	
POC Phone:	
POC Email:	
Name of Location for class:	
Address of Location for class:	
City, State, ZIP:	

Is this location handicap-accessible?	☐ Yes	☐ No	Maximum number of students for location:		
For maximum student participation, the room should be set up "classroom style," so that each student has a chair and a table in front of them. Can that be done at this facility?				☐ Yes	☐ No
Is there a projector in the room?	☐ Yes	☐ No	Is there internet access?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Estimated number of students for this class:					
Facility POC Phone:					
Facility POC Email:					
Requested Date(s) and Time(s):					
Will this class be restricted to a certain group, or open to the public?					

Once your request is processed, the class will be added in TERMS and you will get a link to share so people can register. Please do not use any external programs for processing registrations.
Return this form to the NC CERT Program Manager: cert@ncdps.gov.

CERT Missions

In NC, CERTs are considered to be a County asset. While some Programs are organized at the Town level, most will be activated by their County's Office of Emergency Management. The Sponsoring Agency is responsible for these call-outs and local Operating Guidelines will be followed. CERT programs that are sponsored by a church, school, or workplace shall operate only on their own property, but may be eligible to participate when a call-out is made by NCEM for CERT volunteers. Please report all volunteer hours logged in response to declared emergencies and disasters to the NC CERT Program Office utilizing the Volunteer Log found on page 14.

Any county or State Emergency Response Team (SERT) partner in NC may request NC CERT volunteers via WebEOC when volunteer help is needed. When officially activated, NC CERT Responders may be asked to any of the following tasks, or other assignments:

- Assist at the State Emergency Operations Center in a breakout room, or serving meals, or other duties as assigned by the SERT Leader and/or senior leadership
- Conduct damage assessments of storm-affected areas
- Assist in staffing shelters and/or reception centers
- Assist with first aid/medical treatment of survivors
- Assist with communications
- Assist with staffing Points of Distribution
- Assist with Volunteer and Donation Management
- Assist with vaccine clinics
- Other duties within the scope of CERT training and capabilities

In order to be eligible for these missions, individuals must:

- Be a graduate of *CERT Basic Training*
- Be a member in good standing of a recognized NC CERT program
- Have a current Response Team Profile on TERMS
- Be over the age of 18
- Submit a signed copy of the NC CERT Code of Conduct, found on page 12
- Submit a signed copy of the NC CERT Responder Application and Policy Acknowledgment, found on page 13

Since NC CERT Programs are intended to supplement first responders, volunteers should not self-deploy, but instead wait to be requested through formal channels. Self-deployment could result in termination of the CERT program.

NC CERT Council

Active members of recognized CERT programs who have at least three years of experience with CERT are eligible for a seat on the NC CERT Council. The Council is made up of three (3) representatives from each of the NCEM Branches. The initial Council will be determined by the NC CERT Program Manager in January 2021, for staggered terms of 1 – 3 years. Subsequent Council members will be chosen by general election of all NC CERT members for three-year terms.

Commitment

All Members of NC CERT are asked to maintain contact with the NC CERT Program Office via cert@ncdps.gov and advise immediately of any change of contact information or availability for deployment.

Safety

Safety of NC CERT volunteers is of primary importance during all disasters, incidents, and training situations. The CERT Program Manager and Team Leader(s) must account for and ensure the safety of their team members.

Clothing

All NC CERT volunteers should consider location and type of incident or event, time of day, weather variations, and lighting conditions during all activities. NC CERT volunteers will wear proper clothing and personal protective equipment (PPE). No shorts, sleeveless shirts, or flip flops will be allowed in disaster response. Shorts may be approved for some publicity events during the summer months. The dress code applies to training as well as activation. A reflective vest should be worn at all times during outdoor operations. Any variations for special circumstances will be communicated to the team members by the NC CERT Program Manager. During pandemic times, NC CERT members are expected to wear appropriate PPE according to current state mandates and recommendations.

Protections for Disaster Volunteers

The Volunteer Protection Act (VPA) of 1997 is a Federal law that protects volunteers from liability as long as they are acting in accordance with the training that they have received. VPA protects CERT volunteers during a disaster, and volunteers may also have further protection under relevant state statutes where they reside. North Carolina's "Good Samaritan" laws generally protect CERT volunteers who provide care in a prudent and reasonable manner.

The North Carolina Emergency Management Act (*N.C. Gen. Stat. § 166A-14*) also grants broad qualified immunity to volunteers performing emergency management functions.

Weapons Policy

NC CERT volunteers may not carry any weapon while functioning in any capacity as a CERT volunteer, even if legally authorized to do so.

Alcohol/Drug Use

At no time may alcoholic beverages be purchased or consumed while representing or wearing CERT equipment or clothing. NC CERT volunteers must never arrive at training or deployment under the influence of alcohol or drugs/medications that alter mental status.

Social Media, Digital Images, Communications

Use of social media can pose legal and ethical risks to members and the organization, and can impact NC CERT's reputation and good will. It can also erode trust among community members and jeopardize the privacy and safety of members, survivors, and/or their families. Any communications online may be seen by others as a reflection or representation of your character, judgement, and values, and, in some instances, may be perceived by others as an indirect extension of NC CERT regardless of your intent. Only recognized NC CERT teams may use the CERT logo. In the context of these realities, NC CERT has enacted the following policy:

Allowed: Sharing pictures/videos from training events, special events, safety fairs, recruitment drives, *CERT Basic* Training classes, continuing education classes, monthly meetings, celebrations, and volunteer recognitions.

Not allowed: The taking or sharing of photos or videos at any disaster incident, call-out, emergency response, or other critical incident. NC CERT members need to remember that at such scenes, any and all photography/videography is considered evidence and may be seized by the on-scene authorities. Further, the sharing of this type of media on *any* social media platform or via email could result in civil and/or criminal legal action.

Acknowledgment of Policy, Application, and Volunteer Hour Reporting

- To be a recognized and approved NC CERT member, each individual must sign the Code of Conduct found on page 12 and return it to the NC CERT Program Manager.
- Those who wish to be considered an *NC CERT Responder*, who may be called out on state-sponsored mission, must complete the application on Page 13 and return it to the NC CERT Program Manager.
- All NC CERT volunteers who give their time in response to a declared disaster or emergency, whether with their local team, or a state-sponsored mission, are asked to record their hours on the *Volunteer Hour Reporting Form* on Page 14 and submit it to the NC CERT Program Manager. These hours can be used by the state to offset the 20% cost-sharing with FEMA in a declared event.

North Carolina CERT Code of Conduct Agreement

The office of North Carolina CERT oversees all local CERT programs through support and funding. Throughout North Carolina, thousands of citizens have been trained and the program continues to be bolstered by committed and dedicated members. You, as members of your local CERT program, represent the CERT program to new members, to the public, and to those to whom we render our services. It is important to portray a positive image. ANY NONCOMPLIANCE OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS MAY RESULT IN IMMEDIATE REVOCATION OF YOUR RECOGNITION AS A CERT MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING.

As a trained CERT volunteer in North Carolina, you are expected to comply with the following:
1. Dial 911 for all emergencies, first.
2. Know you are not a professional first responder (i.e. firefighter, police officer, emergency medical technician). You are trained to function as an extension of the professional emergency responders, when such circumstances exist or when requested by emergency services officials. When disaster occurs, your first responsibility is to ensure your own safety and the safety of your family. Do not self-deploy, but wait for an official call-out.
3. Stay within the scope of your training. You have been trained under the curriculum of FEMA's Community Emergency Response Team program. Confine your actions to those guidelines and stay within the scope of your training.
4. Confine your actions to your physical and resource limitations when responding as a member of NC CERT. Such limitations may be determined by, but not limited to, equipment available, physical abilities, knowledge, authority, and hazards.
5. Conduct yourself with professionalism, dignity, and pride, and act appropriately and responsibly at all times while assisting others.
6. Treat fellow team members, other volunteer program participants, sponsoring agency, and property with respect and courtesy.
7. Be respectful of the diversity of team members and those we assist.
8. Partake of no alcohol while responding as CERT and do not report for duty while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
9. You are forbidden to carry guns, or other weapons (you can have multipurpose tools, pliers, screwdrivers, wrenches, etc.). You have been trained for immediate disaster response and there is no need, place or legal authorization for you to carry or use any of the above.
10. You shall not authorize the use of, or use for the benefit or advantage of any person, the name, emblem, endorsement, services or property of NC CERT.
11. You shall not accept, or seek on behalf of any other person, any money or gifts offered as a result of your affiliation with the NC CERT Program.
12. You shall not use your participation in NC CERT to promote any partisan politics, religious matters or positions on any issue.
13. You shall avoid inappropriate conduct, both on- and off-duty, that would jeopardize program effectiveness. Such behavior includes, but is not limited to, the following:
    a. Offensive or profane language or gestures
    b. Public criticism of an NC CERT team member, its leaders or the NC CERT Program
    c. Jeopardizing another team member's safety.

I have read and understand the statements above, and, as a CERT volunteer in the state North Carolina, agree to comply with this Code of Conduct. I understand that if I fail to observe these rules, my recognition as an NC CERT member in good standing may be revoked.

_____
Name/Date

_____
CERT Program/Program Manager (print & sign)

NC CERT Responder Application and Policy Acknowledgement

I, _____, hereby apply to be an NC CERT Responder. I recognize that my participation as an NC CERT Responder will involve physical activity and may carry a risk of personal injury. I further recognize that there are natural and manmade hazards, environmental conditions, diseases, and other risks, which in combination with my actions, can cause injury to me. I hereby agree to assume all risks which may be associated with or may result from my participation in the NC CERT Responder Program, including, but not limited to, transportation to and from volunteer sites, extinguishing small fires, providing disaster medical care (e.g., controlling bleeding, treating shock, treating sprains and fractures, opening airways, transporting patients, etc.), and other similar activities. I recognize that these Program activities will involve physical activity and may cause physical and emotional discomfort. I agree not to hold NC Emergency Management, or the staff or volunteers of the above, responsible for any injuries I may incur during CERT-related activities.

I acknowledge that in my decision to respond to emergency or disaster situations with the NC CERT Program, it is my duty to obey all Federal, State, and local laws while functioning as an NC CERT Responder.

Further, as an NC CERT Responder, I will always use due diligence when I am activated. I will follow the directions of the emergency response agencies and supervisors appointed over me. I will perform my duties in a prudent and reasonable manner, within the scope of my training, at all times.

I hereby certify that I have read and fully understand the information presented in this document. By executing this release, I certify that I have read this document in its entirety, understand all of its terms, and have had any questions regarding the document or release or its effect satisfactorily answered. I sign this Application and Acknowledgement freely and voluntarily.

_____   _____   _____
Signature   Printed Name   Date

_____
Mailing Address

_____   _____
Email   Mobile Telephone

_____
CERT Program Membership/Program Manager

	NC CERT Program Volunteer Hour Reporting Disaster/Emergency

CERT Program:	
Program Manager:	
Incident:	
Location of Work:	
Begin Date:	End Date:

Volunteer Name	Total Number of Hours for this Incident
TOTAL NUMBER OF HOURS:	
Verified by Local CERT Program Manager:	