

Introduction

Following a major disaster, first responders who provide fire and medical services will not be able to meet the demand for these services. Factors as number of victims, communication failures, and road blockages will prevent people from accessing emergency services they have come to expect at a moment's notice through 911. People will have to rely on each other for help in order to meet their immediate life saving and life sustaining needs.

One also expects that under these kinds of conditions, family members, fellow employees, and neighbors will spontaneously try to help each other. This was the case following the Mexico City earthquake where untrained, spontaneous volunteers saved 800 people. However, 100 people lost their lives while attempting to save others. This is a high price to pay and is preventable through training.

If we can predict that emergency services will not meet immediate needs following a major disaster, especially if there is no warning as in an earthquake, and people will spontaneously volunteer, what can government do to prepare citizens for this eventuality?

First, present citizens the facts about what to expect following a major disaster in terms of immediate services. Second, give the message about their responsibility for mitigation and preparedness. Third, train them in needed life saving skills with emphasis on decision making skills, rescuer safety, and doing the greatest good for the greatest number. Fourth, organize teams so that they are an extension of first responder services offering immediate help to victims until professional services arrive. *Page 2 of 3 "Our Community - Our Commitment"*

The CERT course will benefit any citizen who takes it. This individual will be 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 in 28 States and Puerto Rico have conducted CERT training.

Delivery

The CERT course is delivered in the community by a team of first responders who have the requisite knowledge and skills to instruct the sessions. It is suggested that the instructors complete a CERT Train-the-Trainer (TTT) conducted by their State Training Office for Emergency Management or the Emergency Management Institute in order to learn the training techniques that are used successfully by the LAFD.

The CERT training for community groups is usually delivered in 2 1/2 hour sessions, one evening a week over a 7 week period. The training consists of the following:

Session I, DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Session II, DISASTER FIRE SUPPRESSION

Session III, DISASTER MEDICAL OPERATIONS PART I

Session IV, DISASTER MEDICAL OPERATIONS, PART II

Session V, LIGHT SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS

Session VI, DISASTER PSYCHOLOGY AND TEAM ORGANIZATION

Session VII, COURSE REVIEW AND DISASTER SIMULATION

During each session participants are required to bring safety equipment (gloves, goggles, mask) and disaster supplies (bandages, flashlight, dressings) which will be used during the session. By doing this for each session, participants are building a disaster response kit of items that they will need during a disaster.

Having a disaster response kit is a good idea for your family in the event of a significant emergency. On the following page is a "72-Hour Kit," which contains items that will help you get through the first three days of an emergency. While many may already have such a checklist, use this list to supplement what you already have. Being prepared is the best defense you can have should a significant emergency occur in our community.

For more information on CERT programs in our area, look at this website.

<http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/index.shtm> Page 3 of 3 "Our Community - Our Commitment"

72 Hour Kit CERT BAG

Helmet
Goggles
Gloves (leather & latex)
Traffic Vest
Multi-tool (gas/water)
Duct tape/flagging
Pry bar
Flashlight/headlamp
Glow stick
Combo screwdriver
Wrench/dikes
Hammer
Blanket
Snacks
Poncho/bandana

CHILD KIT

Tool apron:
Children's Tylenol
Rx
Powder/Desitin
Pacifier
Bottles
Diapers
Wipes
Clothes
Blanket
Copy of shot records
Water
Formula/food
Toys

ADULT KIT

Tool apron:
Toiletries
Screwdrivers
Wrench/dikes
Hammer
Small sewing kit
Basic first-aid kit
Matches
Medicine
Super glue
Sunscreen
Cards
Can opener
Poncho/blanket

Writing utensil/paper

VEHICLE BAG

Sturdy shoes

Flashlight

Radio

Blanket/jacket/hat

Flares

Jumper cables

Food/ water

Matches

Map (Thomas guide)

WORK BAG

Sturdy shoes

Food/water

Flashlight & batteries

Hat

Poncho

Radio

Map

Matches

PET KIT

Food/water dishes

Leash/collar

Long stake/rope

Copy of shot records

Food

Medicine

Flea/tick treatment

Toys

Map

2000 cal./person/day

1 gal. water/person/day

Water purifier/bleach

Solar flashlight/radio

Wipes

Hard candy