

# Bonita Springs Fire Rescue and Control District Community Emergency Response Team Program Standard Operating Guidelines

## **Purpose:**

The Bonita Springs Fire Rescue and Control District recognizes the need to be able to incorporate and utilize volunteer help during certain emergency or disaster situations. Bonita Springs Fire-Rescue (BSFR) has taken a pro-active stance in this area by training citizens to be part of a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).

The CERT Program educates people about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills. Using the training learned in the classroom and during exercises, CERT members can be called upon to assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event when professional responders are not immediately available to help. CERT members are also capable of supporting emergency response agencies by taking a more active role in emergency preparedness projects in their community.

CERT graduates will be better prepared to respond and cope with the aftermath of natural or manmade disasters. Neighborhood groups receiving CERT training will become a team that can develop plans to help themselves and other residents when a disaster strikes. CERT groups will be provided with information and experience that is unavailable anywhere else in most communities. Topics such as Introduction to Disasters, Disaster Medical Care, Fire Suppression, Search and Rescue and Disaster Planning will be taught to all who attend.

Bonita Springs Fire-Rescue will use trained CERT members to assist in certain community operations. Members can provide crucial support and direction to their development or neighborhood. The purpose of the CERT team is purely to assist. Members will not be acting as a law officer, firefighter or emergency medical technician, and thus, will not be using or carrying guns, knives, or any tools or instrument that is intended to be used as a weapon. However, CERT members are encouraged, but not obligated to use their training, skills, and equipment in disaster situations or to assist their friends and family while awaiting the arrival of trained professional emergency responders.

CERT personnel may be authorized to enter into restricted areas during a disaster upon activation and presentation of their Bonita Springs Fire Control and Rescue District CERT identification card. Entry into such an area will be for official reasons and should be with the approval of Bonita Spring Fire-Rescue's CERT Coordinator or their designee. A CERT identification card should not to be used to enter into zones if there are not requirements indicated for the services of the CERT member or team.

The Bonita Springs Fire Control and Rescue District CERT program is designed to support and integrate into disaster plans. The CERT program is intended to be a "partnership" between the District and local neighborhoods or Bonita Springs' communities that will ultimately reduce the death, injury, and property loss of major disasters.

## **Qualifications:**

1. The potential member shall be at least 18 years of age or older.
2. The potential member shall attend CERT training and continued team training as determined by teams.
3. To become a member of a CERT team, the individual can register with Bonita Springs Fire Control and Rescue District CERT Coordinator and complete the following paperwork:
  - a. CERT Application
  - b. Memorandum of Understanding
  - c. Attachment "A", Legal Status of CERT Participants
  - d. Attachment "B", Release, Hold Harmless and Indemnification Agreement
  - e. Role of CERT Member form

## **Commitment:**

Once a member of CERT, the individual will be accountable for assignments or training in which he/she chooses to assist. The member will be allowed to participate up to the level of their proficiency or as directed. However, in order to be considered "active", that person will need to attend minimum refresher sessions. In addition, other responsibilities of CERT members are to keep contact information or leave of absence information recent with the individual's CERT Captain.

## **Equipment and Supplies:**

Upon completion of the CERT course and registration as a CERT team member, the new team member will be issued an equipment/supply bag including, but not limited to the items listed on the Equipment List (pg. \_). Some items, such as the CERT Shirt and the CERT Helmet will be provided at the first assigned class. If any teams would like additional apparel or supplies for their team, that can be purchased on an individual basis and should be approved by the CERT Coordinator or designee.

## **Leave of Absence:**

If an active CERT member is leaving the area for an extended amount of time (more than 3 weeks) or if family/life commitments require the individual to withdraw from CERT, he/she will be granted a Leave of Absence for an indefinite amount of time upon that person's CERT Captain's discretion. Equipment and supplies will not be required to be returned during the leave of absence. Once the reason for absence is no longer, the team member may be reactivated upon that person's CERT Captain's discretion. No CERT member should take a leave of absence without first notifying their CERT Captain of their absence. BSGD encourages the CERT Team Captain to maintain up-to-date files in case of an emergency. The Captain should be able to know which members of the team are available if activation of their team occurs.

## **Inactivity/Reactivity:**

All member inactivity/reactivity can be decided upon the CERT Captain's discretion. A cause for a member to be considered inactive could be, but is not limited to; returning to a seasonal residence or failure to abide by any regulation the Captain or CERT team has deemed necessary.

## **Dismissal:**

A member may be dismissed for failure or refusal to fulfill basic assignment expectations, for misconduct because of legally proven professional, civil, or criminal violations, or demonstrated physically or verbally that the individual is unable to work within the guidelines of BSFD, Emergency Management and CERT. The member's CERT identification card must be returned upon dismissal. If any CERT member, regardless of rank or CERT group responds to an emergency scene they are unauthorized to be at, that individual or team may be dismissed and all identifications and/or equipment may be confiscated.

## **Courses and Additional Training:**

All potential CERT members shall complete a minimum of 8 modules of training. At the conclusion of the CERT program each member will receive a certificate of completion, their Bonita Springs Fire Control and Rescue District photo identification and their CERT equipment/supply bag. Training opportunities and practice exercises will be conducted during the calendar year. Refresher Medical First Aid/CPR course will be offered for all members by the Bonita Springs Fire Control and Rescue District.

## **Meetings:**

The meeting time, location, and frequency will be held according to each team's judgment. Meetings can be conducted by whomever that team decides. Any agenda or minutes of the meeting will not need to be referenced to the CERT Coordinator, but could be used for the team's future reference. Meeting rooms will be available at Bonita Springs Station 4 upon request.

## **Reports and Record Keeping:**

Reports and record keeping should be kept by the Team Captain or designee and can be made available to the Citizen Corps Liaison. The records should include the following:

1. Current list of active members with 24 hour contact information.
2. List of all individuals trained in CERT, both active and inactive.
3. All certifications, completion of courses, independent study and in-service attendance.
4. Tracking of hours of service, including all special events and meetings.
5. Equipment and supplies issued and replaced.

## **Safety Policies:**

CERT Members will be trained to perform the following operations and duties:

- Light Search and Rescue
- Fire extinguishment in the incipient phases only
- Assist triage of trauma victims
- Set up and staff R&R areas
- Crowd control for major incidents
- Provide basic first aid for public events
- Set up and staff emergency shelters
- Set up and staff a spontaneous volunteer intake center
- Provide support at an incident site and at Emergency Operations Center

Members will be trained under the curriculum of FEMA's Community Emergency Response Team program. Individuals are asked to confine all actions to those guidelines and stay within the scope of training and certification.

All members should confine activities to their physical and resource limitations when responding as a member of a CERT. Such limitations may be determined by, equipment available, physical abilities, knowledge, authority, hazards, and the individual's level of training.

Each individual is asked to bring all of issued gear to each activation. When functioning as a member of Bonita Springs Fire-Rescue's CERT, members should always have their issued CERT equipment with them and display their CERT identification card on the outside of their clothing. As well, it is the Captain's duty to guarantee that all members of the team are utilizing the proper CERT safety equipment and executing proper procedures.

When disaster occurs, the CERT member's first responsibility is to ensure their own safety and the safety of their family. Individuals are encouraged to not venture out on their own to start search and rescue operations without other team members. CERT members should practice the "buddy system".

### **CERT Activation:**

Activation may only be by request of Bonita Springs Fire-Rescue's CERT Coordinator or designee. At no time may any CERT Team self activate. Should a member take action to an emergency, he/she can respond as a private citizen, not as a CERT member.

The Incident Commander at any scene may request the service of CERT. The Incident Commander will contact Bonita Spring Fire-Rescue's CERT Coordinator or designee and request activation of CERT. At this time, the Incident Commander will inform the Coordinator the purpose of the request.

The CERT Coordinator will activate CERT by contacting teams using the call out procedure. Each team's captain will be the primary contact and the captain will be in charge of contacting the other members who are available to participate. The team should meet at the designated area that is specified by the CERT Coordinator.

The team captain is responsible for appointing an acting-captain if he/she should be inactive for any amount of time and can notify the CERT Coordinator of the change in command. The Acting-Captain should notify each member of the team of his indefinite position in case of an emergency. The Acting-Captain should then be the point of contact for his/her team and will be in charge of notifying all members of any activation.

Team members are asked to respond with full equipment, supplies, and appropriate clothing for the weather conditions and the activity.

CERT members are asked to go to the staging area in as few vehicles as possible. Upon arrival, the vehicle(s) should be parked in a location so as not to interfere with scene operations. The CERT Captain should advise the CERT Coordinator of their arrival,

present identification and verify the team's assignment. For safety purposes, each member should have their identification card visible and will be required to check in so the CERT Coordinator can keep an accountability report of all members involved. If a member does not have their identification, that member will not be able to contribute in the activation.

In the occurrence that there is media on scene, CERT members should refer them to the Public Information Officer or Incident Commander before speaking to them or answering any questions.

The team should remain on site until the scenario is resolved or until another team is present to relieve them. At that time, the Incident Commander will notify the CERT Coordinator that all CERT teams are eligible to be deactivated.

If a disaster occurs such as a hurricane, tornado, plane crash, etc., after members ensure that their families are safe, they should assemble with their CERT Captain and group for additional instructions and direction. The CERT Captain is the point of contact for the emergency services. Members should not attempt to contact the police or fire department directly for activation or instruction unless a life-threatening emergency exists. It should be the responsibility of each individual team member to know the contact information of their team's captain and acting-captain.

If unable to contact the CERT Captain due to down phone lines, power outages, etc., members may respond to the pre-designated rally point for the neighborhood CERT. Do this only when sure it is safe to do so. It is not encouraged to leave a safety place during a storm. Each team should have two safe meeting areas that team members know to meet at, if one meeting place is obstructed or unsafe, the team can proceed to meet at the alternative meeting place.

**Call Out:** When CERT is activated, captains will be contacted by the CERT Coordinator. Once the number of needed CERT teams is determined, calls will be made to active teams. Calls are made until the CERT team requirement is filled.

**Debriefing:** At the conclusion of the incident or when relieved by another team, CERT members shall meet at the designated area to review their involvement in the incident. If further counseling is required, arrangements will be made with to provide that counseling.