CERTainly Prepared

News for Ohio CERTs from Ohio EMA

3rd Quarter 2019

V1.1

News for Ohio CERTs
CERTainly Prepared is a quarterly newsletter to ensure regular communication and sharing highlights between Ohio's Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) Programs and Ohio EMA.

This Month's Topics:
- Regional CERT Programs
- Non-Traditional CERT Mission
- National CERT Association
- Seneca CERT Training & Events
- Ohio Responds and You

Regional Programs
Jon Kochis, Fairfield County EMA

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) has been a vital part of Fairfield County Emergency
Management for years. The trained volunteers come from all walks of life, bringing a variety of backgrounds and ideals to the program.

Since 2009, Fairfield County EMA has trained over 600 Fairfield Residents on the functions of CERT. What this means to us is that when a disaster strikes, 600 citizens know what to do and will use their knowledge and skills to assist those in their neighborhood. These residents and their actions will assist first responders, who will be overwhelmed.

Now we are discussing taking the program a step further and partnering with Hocking and Pickaway County to create a Tri-County CERT program. This opportunity will give all three counties a larger roster of volunteers to draw from when an emergency occurs.

Other assets to a larger roster are the capabilities to form specialized teams within CERT such as:

- Sheltering team
- Search and rescue
- Donations team
- Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) team
- Emergency Operations Center (EOC) team

With the development of the Tri-County CERT comes a unique set of issues that must be resolved, some at the State level. Some of these questions are;

- Will each CERT member receive an Oath from each County or will a Tri-County Oath be developed in accordance with ORC 5502.34?
- If a Fairfield County CERT member is deployed to work in Pickaway County and is injured, for example, which county bears the responsibility of the Bureau of Workers Comp claim?
- Will each CERT member be listed in the Ohio Responds database in all three counties or can a Tri-County listing be developed in Ohio Responds?
- Is there an appropriate location to train new CERT classes that is fair to all volunteers? Not all training can be done in one county if the volunteers are pulled from three. Since these are unpaid volunteers, we must take into consideration what we ask them to do.
- Will each County purchase their own CERT backpacks, or will the backpacks be purchased by one source using a combined pot of money?
Even though the concerns seem many at this time, the program lends great possibilities to the Counties involved. Our three Counties continue to work through these issues. We have also posed these questions to the State of Ohio to address the workers comp conundrum. Until then, we have a sound idea, willing participants, and questions to address. Stay tuned!

Auglaize CERT Shines in Non-Traditional Mission

Troy Anderson, Auglaize County HSEM

At 11pm last Christmas Eve, there was a smoke that could be seen in the night sky from over 15 miles away. It was a 6 alarm fire in a downtown building that would leave 26 adults and children homeless. Before Christmas Day had officially begun, the Auglaize County CERT team had been requested to respond.

In addition to the more common CERT missions including traffic control and damage assessment, Auglaize County CERT has adopted a less common mission – that of being the county’s ‘go-to’ team, frequently requested by local fire departments to help individuals displaced by fire and smoke damage.

That Christmas Eve, members of the team quickly established a command post in a safe area down the street and spent the next several hours helping the displaced residents fill out initial paperwork, then transporting them to a local hotel for immediate short term housing. Transportation and sheltering were provided through a mutual aid agreements already in place with providers, including a local hotel. The residents were given Walmart gift cards, in order to be able to purchase immediate necessities.

Less than 12 hours after the fire, partners from the Auglaize County EMA Long Term Recovery Board were
contacted and apprised of the situation and the proverbial ball was rolling. Over the next couple of weeks CERT members staffed a donations center at the fairgrounds, where county residents dropped off larger items such as furniture, bed frames, and other donations to assist those displaced by the fire. Within 27 days, all of those residents had housing!

When there is a displacement of a person, or people, from their home due to fire/smoke damage, the CERT team is requested by the fire department in charge within the first minutes after arrival on the scene. Team members will arrive on scene and help the resident(s) with the paperwork, have them transported to a local hotel, provide them with a bag of initial necessities, and provide them with contact information for agencies that are part of the aforementioned Long Term Recovery Board that can assist them from there. Besides the downtown building fire, the team has responded to three other fires that displaced residents.

The Auglaize County CERT team has been publicly recognized by local agencies for their dedication and professionalism when responding to residents in need. And because of this, the Auglaize County CERT Team is the go to team in the county and has replaced the previous NGO service provider for this mission. In addition, their dedication and commitment, has prompted numerous monetary donations from members of the community to support their efforts.
Where did the NCA come from?

- The NCA was formed with the support of FEMA and various State CERT Programs. The current model is to have two regional representatives for each of the FEMA Regions and one FEMA Observer, per region.

How is Ohio Represented?

- FEMA Region V (based in Chicago) nominated two representatives from the Region: Michelle Hanneken from the Serve Illinois Commission (michelle.j.hanneken@illinois.gov) and Josh Vittie from Ohio EMA (jdvittie@dps.ohio.gov).

What should Ohio CERT Programs do?

- Ohio CERT Programs are encouraged to share their best practices, concerns, and suggestions for CERT to their regional representatives and provide feedback to help improve CERT programs, both, in Ohio and nationwide.

What is the current status of the NCA?

- The National CERT Association (NCA) currently has an appointed Board of Directors, which has: elected officers, established Vision and Mission Statements, and is creating the organizational structure.

What is next for the NCA?

- The NCA Board of Directors met at the Florida CERT Conference (12-14 September 2019), voted to approve the bylaws, and set a ‘hold the date’ for the 2020 National CERT Conference in Missouri (pre-conference training from 13-15 July 2020 and conference 16-18 July 2020).
Seneca CERT ~ Training and Events

Jenny Shetterly ~ Seneca CERT Secretary and FB Editor

Seneca CERT has remained active providing traffic and crowd control for several 5K runs, two large cross county meets (75–100 schools represented at each), for firework displays, the Armed Forces Day event in Findlay, and warming and cooling stations in Tiffin and Fostoria, OH.

In October, we do a two day event in Fostoria, OH that includes patrols to make sure the kids trick or treating have a safe environment to do so and crowd control for the Halloween Parade. Since 2017, the team has covered the Canteen in the event of an emergency that needs food, liquids, or to help with firefighter rehab.

The year is also full of training events and seminars for current members, and twice a year classes for new members are offered. The team stays very active, is always looking for new adventures, and we all enjoy being able to make a difference for the communities around us.

Ohio Responds:
https://ohioresponds.odh.ohio.gov/
Ohio Responds & You!
Josh Vittie, State CERT Coordinator

Does your program have a Local Administrator for Ohio Responds? Do you verify that your members are registered? Do you know why your members need to register?

First off ~ What is Ohio Responds? Ohio Responds is a database maintained by Ohio EMA and Ohio Department of Health in accordance with Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 5502.281, which provides limited liability protection to emergency management volunteers.

Each program (CERT, MRC, or Citizen Corps Council) is required to have a Local Administrator. This is an individual who can approve / deny individuals that register with your program and track members through the database.

To ensure that your volunteers are protected, you need to verify that members are registered on the site prior to an activation and that they have been administered the Loyalty Oath (and you must document that it was administered) as outlined in ORC 5502.34.

Members need to register for two reasons: 1.) It provides them liability protection while acting on behalf of your program, in accordance with ORC and 2.) It’s the law!

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