Beaverton

Community Emergency Response Team

Concept of Operations

Initial Release

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Version 1.0

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Introduction

Purpose

The Beaverton Community Emergency Response Team (BCERT) is a volunteer component of the City of Beaverton (City)'s Emergency Management Program. This document provides the basic guidelines and framework for BCERT Operations across all scenarios. It includes basic guidance for all activities including planning, training, execution, response, and chain of command. It outlines the basic responsibilities for all participants in BCERT activities.

The initial release of this document will focus on the Preparation, Planning, Actions and Deployment of BCERT resources during a disaster up to deploying as a CERT Strike team. Future document releases will include information for other BCERT activities.

Audience

This document provides guidance for the leadership and membership of BCERT, the Beaverton Emergency Management Program (EM) staff, and any *ad hoc* Incident Management Team (IMT), Emergency Operations Center (EOC), or Emergency Communications Center (ECC) leadership that interact with the BCERT volunteers (CERTs). While many of these persons are not CERT volunteers they are in positions where understanding of BCERT structure and guidelines will enable their best use of the BCERT resource.

Guiding Principles

CERT volunteers (CERTs) will at all times:

Act safely to assist the greatest number of people in the shortest amount of time.

Use proper size-up techniques to determine the safety and priority of their response.

Operate within established policies and procedures including:

> Emergency Management Volunteer Handbook
> Emergency Management Personal Identifiable Information Policy and Procedure
> CERT Basic Participant Manual
> Beaverton CERT documents
> > CERT Field Operating Guide
> > CERT Communications Field Operating Guide
> > BCERT By-laws
> Other policies and procedure related to the above documents

Plan and act within the scope of the assigned mission considering the:
> **NEED** for the services that we have, and the
> **CAPABILITY** of performing those services, with reasonable
> **SAFETY** for ourselves and those we might help

Priorities

There are two sets of priorities in effect during a Community Emergency Response Team response.

Personal Priorities - Individual CERTs have personal priorities of safety and welfare to assure that they are physically and emotionally capable of functioning with a CERT Strike Team:

1. Themselves
2. Their family
3. Their neighborhood
4. Their community

Organization Priorities - The CERT organization has a set of mission priorities for the actions that they take; from the Strike Team up through the chain of command:

1. CERT individual and team safety
2. Human life and safety
3. Public infrastructure
4. Protection of property
5. Protection of the environment

For items 3 - 5 the prioritized effort is more to mitigate both the impact of existing damage and the impact during the response.

Chain of Command

CERTs function as teams that are organized to operate within the chain of command as defined in the Incident Command System (ICS) and National Incident Management System (NIMS).

We assist and support the City of Beaverton and other community service agencies as directed by the Beaverton Office of Emergency Management to provide community service and to gain experience in teamwork and skills development that will enhance our capabilities to perform in an emergency.

In a disaster where the EOC has been established, the CERT chain of command culminates in a Group Supervisor reporting to the Operations Chief.

Operational Area

The operational service area of CERT is defined by the geographical boundaries of the Beaverton School District (BSD). Since the BSD boundaries extend beyond the City limits, there will be some interaction and cooperation with Portland NET and Tigard CERT teams.

Under the direction of Beaverton Emergency Management, the CERT organization may serve in areas outside, but near the operational service area; under mutual aid agreements.

CERTs are not formally typed in FEMA to serve outside the immediate area. They will not be deployed as a FEMA resource outside of the service area.

Key CERT Capabilities

- Teamwork within a chain of command
- Situational awareness and assessment of safety and solutions in a stressful environment
- Serve as a force multiplier for public emergency response services and agencies through the Incident Command System
- Understand and act within scope of authority, mission scope, and training
- Reconnaissance and reporting to identify individual and community risks in an emergency and its aftermath for Incident Command
- Light search and rescue as needed within our capability to do so safely
- Triage and disaster medical support within our capabilities
- Vehicle marshaling and traffic control
- Crowd management
- Communications within and among teams as well as up and down the chain of command, with support from the Beaverton Emergency Radio Team (BERT)
- Coordination as appropriate in planning and training with adjacent CERT and NET teams

Levels of CERT Activity

CERTs participate in four levels of situations, each of which has different guidelines:

Level 1 - Planned Exercises, Drills and Training - Volunteer teams at various levels and responsibilities will routinely schedule meetings for information exchange. For example, GeoTeam and unit meetings, Steering Committee meetings, CERT Roundtable, skill training, and field exercises. Operational instructions and assignments will be given in advance and/or at the event.

Level 2 - Planned event (City and Community Service) – These are civic events planned and scheduled at the CERT Supervisor level. For example, Night Market, Flicks, tree lighting, open houses, marathons and parades. Operational instructions and assignments will be given in advance and/or at the event.

Level 3 - Incident – An unplanned event where the City requests volunteer assistance, e.g. incident crowd management, minor or localized disaster, walkaways, family reunification. Volunteers will be notified of deployment information and instructions via automated texting to mobile phone and email.

Level 4 - Disaster – An unplanned event where all or most of the City is impacted by a major regional incident. First responders will be considerably delayed (days/weeks). Families and neighborhoods will be isolated from assistance. CERT teams may be activated by all available means. Upon activation, CERTs will be given team and mission assignments directly via radio or upon arrival at a rally point. The City's AM Radio (1610 kHz) may be used for general instructions to CERTs.

Characteristics for CERTs Actions

Each level of situation will have common high-level characteristics:

Basic preparedness – Staging of personal gear and supplies necessary to respond to any level of CERT activation.

Activation – Authorization to report for deployment as a CERT.

Mission preparation – Deciding to respond to activation and assembling the necessary gear and clothing to support the CERT member in the particular situation.

Activation confirmation – A CERT's acknowledgment to command authority that they have accepted activation and are enroute to a particular rally point or other designated assembly place. Confirmation is not normally required for routine meetings and training unless the notice or calendar requires sign-up. In the case of an incident or disaster, CERTs must attempt to communicate activation confirmation to the appropriate command authority.

CERTs are operating under the authority and responsibility of the City when they arrive at the designated location (e.g. assembly location, rally point, staging area) and sign-in with personnel in charge or designees. CERTs traveling to the designated location are considered a private citizen until they are properly signed-in.

Deployment assignments – Once signed-in, CERTs will be given deployment assignments by CERT leadership. Deployment assignments include: where to report, when to report, who to report to, what task(s) will be performed, and for how long.

Every situation is unique in its own way. Preparation and flexibility are the keys to success.

Demobilization - When the deployment assignment(s) have been completed, CERTs are formally demobilized (released) by CERT Leadership when they complete necessary debriefing and sign-out from the activity. They then leave the area and are considered private citizens.

Level 1 - Planned Exercises, Drills, and Training [To be Expanded Later]

Overview

Activation

Mission Preparation

Deployment

Demobilization

Level 2 - Planned Event (City and Community Service) [To be Expanded Later]

Overview

Activation

Mission Preparation

Deployment

Demobilization

Level 3 – Incident [To be Expanded Later]

Overview

Activation

Mission Preparation

Deployment

Demobilization

Level 4 - Disaster Preparation, Planning, Action and Deployment

There are multiple levels of preparation and mitigation that CERTs and their families can act on prior to a disaster. Likely disasters for our area include:

> Extreme Heat
> Windstorm, including tornado
> Winter Storm
> Drought
> Earthquake
> Flooding
> Volcanic Ash
> Landslide

Appendix A has links to information on personal, family and neighborhood mitigation and preparedness.

Personal and Family Preparation

In a disaster, the CERT's priority must be on themselves and their family.

CERTs should participate in exercises and training to maintain and enhance their ability to respond effectively.

It is likely that CERTs will want/need to contact a hierarchy of emergency response while they are stabilizing themselves and their family. The *Handbook and Field Operations Guide For CERT Communication* includes details on the planned infrastructure and methods for this communication, recognizing that public emergency response may be significantly delayed, and that their status as a CERT gives them no priority.

CERTs may decide to provide assistance at several levels:

> Self and Family
> Neighborhood
> As a CERT Team Member

CERTs must prepare themselves and their kits to respond to the disaster at whatever levels they choose to serve. Appendix B and the CERT Basic Participant Manual provide guidelines for what levels of kits may be necessary.

If the CERTs plan to focus primarily on their street/neighborhood, then they must consider what tools and materials are necessary to assist in a comparatively limited area and with limited, or no, first responder or CERT assistance. As such, they act in their personal capacity and not as CERTs.

If they plan to deploy as a CERT member, they must prepare clothing and a response kit to be able to safely and effectively respond multiple times over several days as they are physically and mentally able.

Team Preparation

CERT Strike Teams will respond to wider neighborhood areas as a force-multiplier for professional emergency responders. CERT GeoTeams should plan as follows:

Identify their primary and secondary rally point locations, primary and secondary routes and means of transportation, and time(s) of day to report as established by their GeoTeam

Identify the prioritized areas of most likely effective response, assuring that the team will not be operating in areas already covered or being covered by other strike teams

Identify the likely CERT volunteers to respond to sections of the geographic area.

Identify the likely hazards within the prioritized areas

Plan and coordinate with BERT the specific communication hierarchy for effective radio communication to individual volunteers, intra-team, inter-team and the EOC. The *Handbook and Field Operations Guide For CERT Communication* includes details on the planned infrastructure and methods for this communication.

Plan the supply and support for any staged team material.

Command Preparation

In a disaster, the plan is for the EOC to be activated at the Public Safety Center (PSC). There are alternate sites identified, if necessary.

The CERT command staff team will form the PSC-based CERT command.

The CERT command structure, assigned to Operations, will coordinate the CERT Strike Team activity in the field based on team status and assignments from the Operations Section Chief. Communication to the field units will be via radio coordinated by the Communications Unit in the Logistics Section.

Additional CERT command structure will be established, either at the PSC or in the field to maintain appropriate Span of Control.

Initial Response

Once the CERT member has themself and their family in a reasonably safe and stable situation, they can consider what assistance they can provide to the neighborhood and the city prior to deployment.

In the aftermath of a regional disaster, all emergency response services and infrastructure will be disrupted and overwhelmed. It may take days or weeks to be able to get additional resources available to respond to specific needs. Full restoration of public transportation and service infrastructure elements may take months.

Two areas CERTs, as individuals, may assist in their neighborhood are:
Observation - Situation Reports – Damage Assessment
Neighborhood help and resource coordination

Observation - Situation Reports

Information on the status of neighborhoods is vital to EOC Operations and Incident Command. Only known situations can be prioritized. Prior to activation and deployment, CERTs can provide timely situation reports on themselves, their family, their immediate neighborhood and other areas they have observed.

If safe to do so, these assessments can be made from the front porch assessing the immediate neighborhood. Neighborhood tours should only be made with one or more trusted associates (not necessarily CERT volunteers) and not far from the relative safety of the home.

Knowing the neighborhood before an incident will allow determining what's "normal" for your area. The neighbor with the dog that barks at anyone who passes by. The culvert that is always dry in the middle of summer. Noting these normalities can help determine neighborhood potential issues after an incident. Noticing the dog is no longer barking could indicate something is wrong at the house. A culvert full of water when it's been dry weather could indicate a burst water pipe somewhere.

From these assessments, timely and accurate situation reports should be made. Life/safety information should be forwarded to 911 or to First Responder authorities, if they are available. If not, radio communication up the command chain to the EOC is the next alternative. CERTs are authorized to use designated amateur radio or public safety channels for this purpose.

Neighborhood and Resource Coordination

Prior to being formally deployed as part of the city response, CERTs may act as individuals and use their skills to organize and assist their neighbors, (*i.e.*, the dozen or so surrounding homes). They must take care to NOT identify as formal city/CERT resources. For safety, they may use their assigned CERT Personal Protective Equipment. As individuals, they are not protected from liability or medically insured by the City.

Safety is always the number one concern and focus. The CERT member must realize that their capabilities are very limited and not become overwhelmed when too many tasks are taken on. The task is to assist immediate needs of close neighbors without sacrificing safety or operating outside of training and ability.

Search and Rescue activities are not safe and initiating medical treatment limits the volunteer to that treatment, which could quickly overwhelm the volunteer.

It is the nature of humans to want to help others in an emergency. Some neighbors may have special skills or training (medical, technical, etc.) that may be of value even though they are not CERT members. CERTs may be aware of such individuals through *Map Your Neighborhood*, *2 Weeks Ready* or prior social interaction. It is important to get to know the capabilities of surrounding neighbors, safely working with them within their comfort level to accomplish basic stabilization tasks. (Reference *Spontaneous Volunteers*)

Insurance and Liability

The State of Oregon has statutes that require a public agency to provide Workers' Compensation and liability insurance coverage for professional and volunteer responders in a Level 4 disaster or during formal training. For CERTs, this coverage begins when a volunteer accepts official deployment and formally signs in to a staging area (e.g. rally point). This protection continues while they are deployed in the course and scope of their official duties. CERT-trained volunteers acting as individuals in their neighborhood are NOT covered by this statute.

Team Response

Activation

CERTs should report ready for deployment only after the priorities of a stable and comparatively safe situation for self and family are satisfied.

If communication services are available and functioning, CERTs may receive a text or email with specific activation instructions. The Handbook and Field Operations Guide for CERT Communications includes both the general frequencies as well as frequencies assigned to each GeoTeam. The City AM Radio may broadcast general activation guidelines. CERTs should respond to the information and act on the instructions as and when they are able.

If chain of command communication cannot be established, then CERTs should report to an appropriate Rally Point.

CERTs responding to an activation will:

Dress appropriately and collect their response kit from their home, car, or workspace.

Consider the length of time away from home when packing.

Place high priority on their personal safety.

Travel to their rally point or alternate rally point unless otherwise expressly directed by command.

Observe and report through the chain of command any situations significant to management of the incident and any situations threatening public safety, including damage assessment.

Rally Point

Individual CERTs may not act or represent themselves as CERTs during an emergency unless they have been activated and they have been given deployment orders. An *exception* is observing and reporting conditions encountered while enroute to a rally point or initial assignment location. If communication with CERT Command is not established, directly or indirectly, from the Rally Point and deployment instructions have not been issued, those CERTs at the Rally point are not yet deployed and must either wait at the rally point until the end of the assembly period designated in their GFOG-or demobilize to return at the next designated time, if they are able. CERTs who demobilize may not act under CERT direction or represent CERT.

At their discretion, CERTs may respond to life-threatening emergency conditions encountered. Being able to get to the rally point and reporting their observations will often be the better choice.

Each GeoTeam will have its own response plan included in the GFOG for its members to follow once activated. Typically, these plans will designate rally point locations, days of week and times of day for CERTs to deploy upon activation. CERTs near GeoTeam boundaries should be aware of rally points established by adjacent GeoTeams and respond to one of those rally points if better able to do so than to reach a rally point within their own GeoTeam area.

Strike Teams

A strike team will consist of four to seven CERT volunteers. CERTs will not form teams or undertake missions until an appropriate number of members can assemble for deployment, except for reconnaissance teams as noted below.

A CERT Strike Team consists of a peer group of CERT members. There is no pre-defined command hierarchy. Therefore, strike teams are led by the first CERT to arrive at that rally point. As circumstances evolve, the strike team may unanimously select another team lead from their peer group. Higher-level command may designate a lead. There is always one, and only one team lead. A deployed strike team is authorized to conduct reconnaissance, triage, first aid, and light search and rescue according to Beaverton CERT protocols, guidelines, and authorities.

The exception to the four-person minimum is pure reconnaissance, in which case a neighborhood size-up may be conducted by a team of at least two CERT volunteers. Recon-only teams are not authorized to conduct operations beyond reconnaissance and triage that does not involve entry into a building or unsafe area. Performing anything other than reconnaissance needs to be reported as a change of status update to command.

Within each team, the members will maintain pairs when conducting search and rescue activities, each pair being always in direct visual and voice contact with one another. The team leader and, if possible, a radio operator/scribe will remain at the perimeter of the operational area where team pairs are active. Team pairs need to maintain contact with their team leader at all times during SAR operations.

All CERTs deployed in any location, including at the EOC or command posts, will wear appropriate PPE including, but not limited to, their CERT safety vests and display their CERT identification on their vests or lanyards.

Search and Rescue teams will not enter any building or structure which is heavily damaged. They may, however, approach within a safe distance to determine occupancy. CERTs will not enter any property, building or structure, regardless of damage, without express permission or invitation of the owner or person in charge of the premises, or as approved by CERT Group Command. Instead, they will provide a situation report to command that includes any observations indicating exigent circumstances and await direction from command before entering or moving on.

If on private property not open to the public, every CERT will identify themselves vocally upon seeing any other person, and will promptly acknowledge and comply with any request by such person to leave the premises.

No CERT member will provide aid beyond their scope of training and certification.

Upon arrival of professional first responders, CERTs will hand off the scene, provide a situation report to both the professional first responders and Command, and provide only provide further assistance to first responders as requested.

Spontaneous Volunteers

In any type of disaster, most people who are least affected by the event want to assist others. These people are Spontaneous Unaffiliated Volunteers (SUVs). They want to assist their neighbors and friends during the event. CERTs encountering SUVs should refer them to the strike team leader or other local command for consideration.

In any activity, particularly in a disaster, there must be levels of knowledge and trust between the participants. Knowledge of the person's capabilities and trust that they can follow directions and perform duties without endangering themselves or others. Prior interaction with the person, e.g. a neighbor, and/or a brief interview with the person (if time allows) can provide basic knowledge of the person. They may be better known by another member of the team who could provide recommendations for the SUV's assignment. Absent a good fit with an appropriate trust level, the person should not be assigned any duties.

Since many people have some skills to help others, it is important to focus on those skills which will be the greatest help without sacrificing safety. Being a familiar face to neighbors is comforting and can assist during the stressful time.

As a CERT member, it is important to have spontaneous volunteers contribute without interfering with the overall work of CERT teams or jeopardizing the safety of themselves or others. They need to focus on their safety and health first. Have them consciously avoid actions that could involve danger to themselves or others. Guide them away from rescue efforts or climbing through debris. Have them buddy up and stay well in sight. Keep people focused on the task at hand instead of wandering about without guidance.

Assigning tasks to SUVs could involve some liability if they or others are injured while following your instructions.

Just in time jobs for spontaneous volunteers may include:
- Scribing during triage, or with strike team leaders on the perimeter during search and rescue.
- Assist forming and maintaining safe gathering areas for the uninjured.
- Being calming presence and providing companionship for victims who have been moved to a place of safety but are experiencing anxiety and stress

It is normal after a disaster to try to regain control of the situation, but some may, instead, get frustrated or angry. CERT training does not include physical confrontation or engagement. Managing an unruly or angry person is beyond CERT capabilities to handle safely and should not be attempted.

CERT response to unruly or angry persons should be as follows:

- Politely request they step back to a perimeter and cease involvement for their own safety and the safety of responding CERTs and professional responders.
- Redirect their efforts to an appropriate location where they may be of service.
- Do not engage in arguments or use aggressive language.
- Do not offer or threaten physical resistance to their efforts to help, but attempt to redirect those efforts to the least dangerous activities, even if that is "make work".
- Disengage and report any active interference, threatening behavior, or display of weapons via emergency report to command once in a place of safety.
  - While disengaging, always maintain visual contact with the person(s). Once when they are out of sight, maintain a heightened level of caution in case they follow or return.

Response to Violent or Threatening Behavior

CERTs are not authorized to engage in law enforcement activities or to use physical force other than as reasonably necessary for self-defense after attempting to disengage. CERTs should never engage any person displaying a weapon or threatening physical violence. CERTs should remove themselves from the situation and give an emergency report to command once in a place of safety.

CERTs volunteering on a CERT mission or wearing any clothing displaying a CERT logo are prohibited from carrying any firearm, electronic control device (*e.g.*, Taser or stun gun), chemical device such as pepper spray or gel, or other device that could be used as a weapon other than tools appropriate for performing duties within their mission.

If a CERT believes that they have an imminent concern of being attacked in a manner that may result in their death or serious bodily injury, they may act in self-defense. Threatening words alone do not constitute such a danger. Examples of imminent concern:

Menacing movement toward you
"I have a gun and I am going to shoot you" even if no gun is visible.

`Glossary

ACTIVATION - Notice from Beaverton CERT supervisory authority that BCERT, a particular CERT team, or an individual CERT receiving the notice is activated for CERT service for an incident or event.

BEAVERTON EMERGENCY RADIO TEAM (BERT) – The volunteer organization reporting to the Emergency Management Program responsible for planning, operating and maintaining the radio equipment used for all Emergency Management activities in all situation levels. They provide radio operation and protocols training to CERTs

DISASTER – A major, regional incident where local first responders (e.g. police and fire) are overwhelmed, communication lines are compromised, and there may be widespread harm to people, property, and infrastructure.

EMERGENCY - A serious, unexpected, and often dangerous situation requiring immediate action.

EVENT - See **PLANNED EVENT**

EXERCISES - Formal activities authorized by a public safety agency focused on acquiring or improving specific skill sets.

FIRST RESPONDER - Police, Fire/EMS/ambulance personnel, and in some cases military personnel who arrive on scene first to provide assistance or incident resolution at the scene of an emergency.

GEOGRAPHIC TEAM (GeoTeam) – The CERTs service area is divided into GEOGRAPHIC areas to support planning and training TEAMS for neighborhood response in a disaster.

GEOGRAPHIC TEAM FIELD OPERATIONS GUIDE (GFOG) – Information and direction supplemental to the Concept of Operations and the BCERT Field Operations Guide directed to individuals who are operating within a specific Geographic Team (GeoTeam) area. Examples include specific rally point designations, arrival timing, and unique local hazards.

INCIDENT – An unplanned event that has *ad hoc*, real time, planning and documentation that defines command structure and assignments. The BCERT command structure will report to a hierarchy of Emergency Management and Beaverton Police Department personnel.

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM (IMT) – An incident management team is dispatched or mobilized during complex emergency incidents to provide a command and control infrastructure in order to manage the operational, logistical, informational, planning, fiscal, community, political, and safety issues associated with complex incidents.

An example would be a team from Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue during a complex incident where multiple agencies respond. Most major wildland fires, multi-day events, and complex disasters will use multiple IMT's to be able to cover all aspects until recovery.

Can be interchangeable with All-Hazards Incident Management Teams.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) – Clothing and equipment designed to protect or minimize the risk of injury, infection or exposure to harmful conditions. All protective equipment must be maintained and fit correctly on the wearer.

PLANNED EVENT – An activity which is known ahead of time and documented as part of normal operations. These include meetings, training, exercises and community events. Planned events may exceed local ability to respond.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS - The mindful perception of environmental elements and events in the context of the present moment of time and space, the comprehension of their meaning, and the anticipation of their future status in the very near term.

Knowing what is going on around you and anticipating what happens next. The first and critical part of SIZE-UP.

SITUATION REPORT – A verbal or written description of the current conditions, CERTs observations. It should contain concise, accurate, and verifiable, factual information that gives a clear picture of the "who, what, where, when, why and how" of what is before them. It may include plans for action or recommendations and requests for further response or resources.

SIZE-UP - As used in BCERT operations, "size-up" is a nine-step process to conduct a careful and conscious examination of a scene or location in order to evaluate needs, hazards, resources, priorities, and capabilities, and then form and communicate a plan of action.

STAGING AREA- A physical location where personnel and equipment are assembled prior to deployment.

STRIKE TEAM – As defined in the Incident Management System, an organized team of emergency responders that have similar, homogeneous skills.

References

Incident Command System Training (ICS 100, 200, 700)

FEMA CERT Basic Training Participant Handbook (current version)

Beaverton Emergency Management Personally Identifiable Information (PII) Policy and Procedures

Beaverton Emergency Management Volunteer Handbook

Beaverton CERT Disciplinary Policy

Handbook and Field Operations Guide for CERT Communications (current version)

Volunteer Communications Plan (current version)

Appendices

Appendix A - Personal and Neighborhood Disaster Mitigation Sources

Take Five to Survive: https:take5tosurvive.com

Federal CERT website: https://fema.gov/CERT

Oregon State Individual Preparedness website: https://www.oregon.gov/oem/hazardsprep/Pages/Individual-Preparedness.aspx

Federal Ready.gov website; https://www.Ready.gov

Appendix B - CERT Turnout Kits

The type and amount of turnout kit will depend on the level of the situation. The referenced presentation refers to Level 4 – Disaster

18Mar2023 CERT Turnout Kit Presentation

This document has been reviewed for Document Accessibility