

Salt Lake Citizen Corps:

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Coordination Guide

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This guide provides a basic framework for coordinating Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT Teams) in Salt Lake City. It is useful in providing basic organization and terminology that is consistent for all CERT Teams throughout the city. The intent of this guide is to provide a framework, or foundation, that can be added upon by individual communities as they rally together to develop an overall community response that is tailored to the unique needs and resources of each community. In this document, the teams are referred to as “CERT Teams” while individual volunteers are referred to as “CERT Members.”

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
Glossary	2
Salt Lake Citizen Corps.....	4
CERT Coordination.....	4
Establishing a CERT Team.....	6
CERT Team Operations.....	8
CERT Operations Policies	8
Basic Objectives of CERT Operations	8
CERT Team Organization	9
Operations & Logistics Duties/Responsibilities	11
Basic CERT Principles	14

Glossary

Branch: the second CERT Team division in Section-Branch-Group

CERT: Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), also thought to be Community Emergency Response Training (CERT)—this document uses “CERT Team” to avoid confusion; community emergency response groups comprised of volunteer community members who have been CERT trained by a local fire department or emergency management office

CERT Area: the geographical area for which a CERT Team is responsible

CERT Coordinator: a Citizen Corps volunteer responsible for creating a self-sufficient CERT Team through efforts such as planning, educating, recruiting, practicing, and other activities; reports to the Quadrant Coordinator

CERT Member: a person who has received formal CERT training

CERT Program: the Salt Lake City program focused on CERT training and CERT Coordination

CERT Team: broadly, the CERT Members in a CERT Area; more specifically, the CERT Members who coordinate to form an organized team

CERT Team Leader: the person responsible for steering the general activities of the overall CERT Team; the person best qualified to fulfill the duties of that position; not necessarily the same person as the CERT Team Coordinator

Community Council: community groups that represent neighborhood interests in a portion of the city; there are 21 community councils in Salt Lake City

Community Council Area: the geographical area of a community council

Community Preparedness Coordinator: a Salt Lake City employee in the Emergency Management Office assigned to manage the CERT Program and conduct other community emergency preparedness and response efforts

Group: the third CERT Team division in Section-Branch-Group

Quadrant Coordinator: a Citizen Corps volunteer responsible for coordinating CERT Teams in 4-7 community council areas

Salt Lake Citizen Corps: a community organization that connects volunteers with various volunteer programs and opportunities in Salt Lake City

Salt Lake City Coordination Center: Salt Lake City’s center for coordinating the City’s overall emergency response efforts

Salt Lake City Emergency Management Office: the City division that manages the City's emergency preparedness and response efforts

Section: the first CERT Team division in Section-Branch-Group

Span of Control: the organizational principle that each supervisor has 3-7 people who report to him or her, the optimal number being 5

Sub-Branch Leaders: a mid-level supervisor position that can be established by a Branch Leader if the number of Groups in a Branch exceeds a manageable amount of supervisory work

Subcoordinators: a mid-level coordinator position that can be established by a Quadrant Coordinator if the number of CERT Teams in a Quadrant exceeds a manageable amount of supervisory work

Unity of Command: Each CERT Member has only one person from whom he or she takes direction. In other words, each CERT Member has only one supervisor

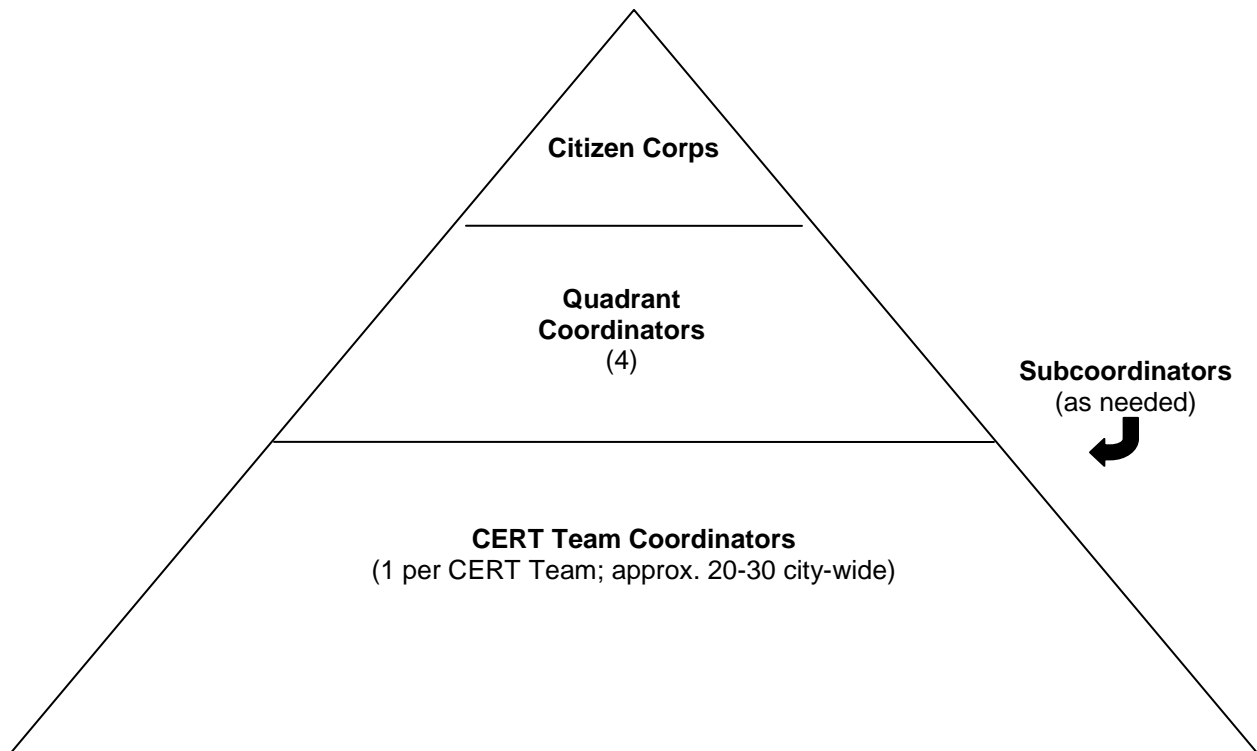
Salt Lake Citizen Corps

In Salt Lake City, CERT Teams are coordinated through Salt Lake Citizen Corps and its partnership with the city's Emergency Management Office. The Salt Lake Citizen Corps is a community organization that connects volunteers with various volunteer programs and opportunities in Salt Lake City. A major volunteer program is the CERT Program. The volunteer work provided through CERT Teams is vital to an effective emergency response in a large-scale disaster and it has proven valuable in isolated emergency situations and even in non-emergency events where a coordinated volunteer effort is needed. While CERT training is conducted by Salt Lake City, CERT Team coordination is a partnership effort between the Salt Lake Citizen Corps community organization and the Community Preparedness Coordinator in the city's Emergency Management Office.

CERT Coordination

CERT Teams are coordinated through the hierarchical network of volunteers depicted in the following figure.

FIGURE 1: Network of Volunteers Who Coordinate CERT Teams



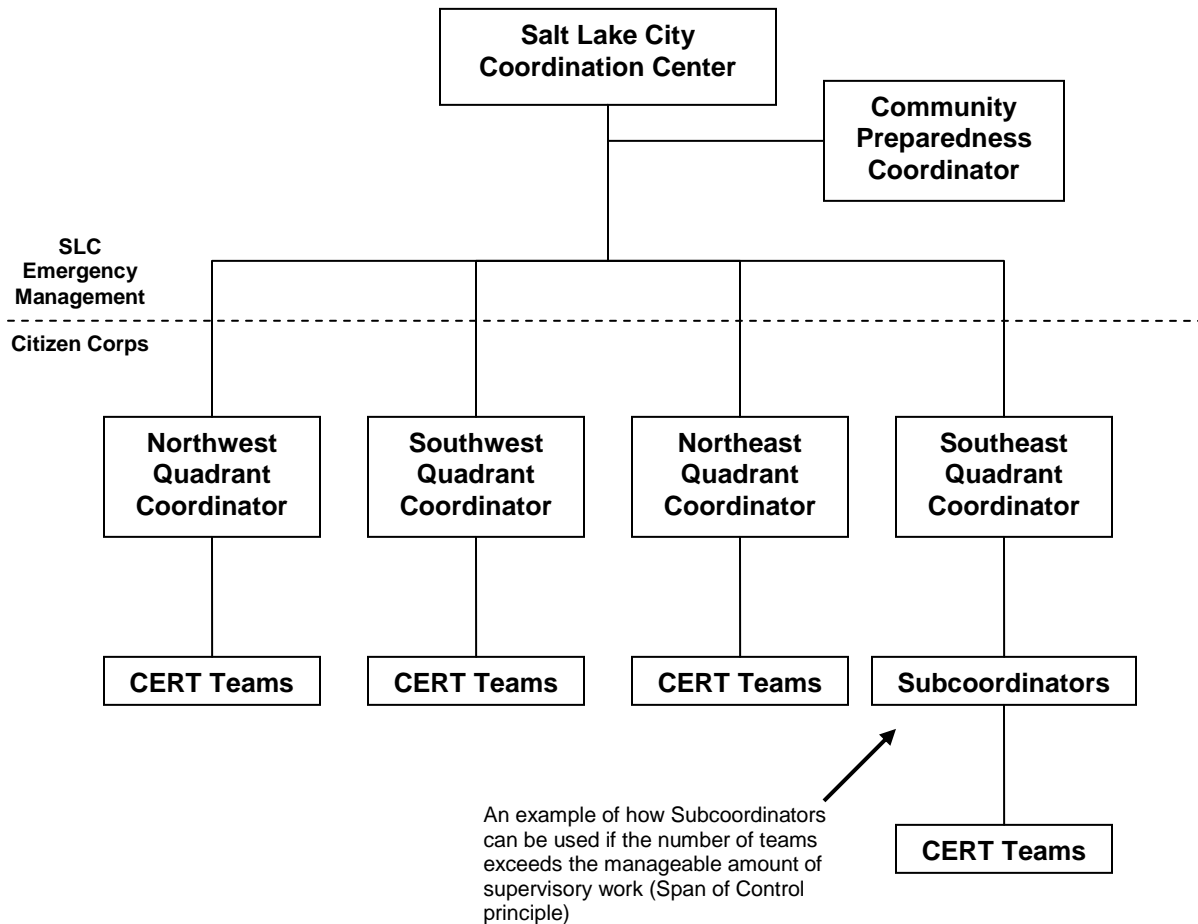
The community council areas are the basic level on which CERT Teams will be organized. Community councils are community groups that represent neighborhood interests in a portion of the city. There are 21 community councils in Salt Lake City. In many cases, there will be one CERT Team within a given community council's geographical area. However, some community council areas are too large for a single team and will need two or more CERT Teams while others will be too small to form a fully-functioning CERT Team and will therefore need to join forces with a neighboring community. It is recommended that a CERT Team have **a minimum of 20 CERT Members** with the assumption that, in any given emergency, as many as half of that amount may not participate for various reasons. The boundaries for each CERT Team define the "**CERT Area**" and are recorded on the **Salt Lake City CERT Team Map** maintained by the Citizen Corps Council. Note that while community council areas are the basic level on which CERT Teams will be organized, it is not required for CERT Team coordination to occur within the actual community council organization. Ideally, however, the community council organization will be actively involved in CERT Team coordination to some degree.

Salt Lake City is divided into "quadrants," or fourths, each with a "**Quadrant Coordinator**" who is responsible for coordinating CERT Teams in 3-7 community council areas. The Quadrant Coordinator is trained and supported by Citizen Corps and the city's Community Preparedness Coordinator. The "span of control" principle states that each supervisor has 3-7 people who report to him or her, the optimal number being 5. If the number of CERT Teams in a Quadrant exceeds a manageable amount of supervisory work, "**Subcoordinators**" may be recruited to coordinate subquadrant areas and in turn report to the Quadrant Coordinator.

Each CERT Team has a "**CERT Team Coordinator**" who reports to the Quadrant Coordinator. The CERT Team Coordinator is responsible for creating a self-sufficient CERT Team through efforts such as planning, educating, recruiting, practicing, and other activities. (Note: The CERT Team Coordinator *may* be but is *not necessarily* the Team Leader when the team is activated. The Team Leader should be the person best qualified to fulfill the duties of that position.)

In summary, four Quadrant Coordinators are trained and supported by Citizen Corps and the city's Community Preparedness Coordinator. In turn, the Quadrant Coordinators train and support CERT Team Coordinators. Quadrant Coordinators may use Subcoordinators if the amount of CERT Teams in the Quadrant is difficult to supervise. The following figure illustrates the lines of communication and coordination for CERT Teams in Salt Lake City.

FIGURE 2: Lines of Communication & Coordination



In a disaster, these lines of communication and coordination will be used. CERT Teams will function within their own CERT Areas. Through their assigned Quadrants, CERT Teams can communicate their status, needs, and resources to neighboring CERT Teams and to the “**Salt Lake City Coordination Center**”—the heart of the city’s emergency response operations.

Establishing a CERT Team

CERT-trained people within each CERT Area make up the members of the CERT Team. Following are some basic guidelines for establishing a CERT Team:

1. **Salt Lake Citizen Corps** (in partnership with the city’s Community Preparedness Coordinator) recruits and trains volunteer **Quadrant Coordinators** who in turn recruit and train **CERT Team Coordinators**. The CERT Team Coordinator is responsible for creating a self-sufficient CERT Team through efforts such as planning, educating, recruiting, practicing, and other activities.
2. The CERT Team Coordinator **identifies CERT-trained residents** (CERT Members) within the CERT Area and collects contact information for each such as phone numbers

and home and e-mail addresses. The Coordinator should also **identify all other current emergency response coordination efforts** in the CERT Area. Ideally, community emergency response plans in businesses and churches will be integrated with the CERT Team response to provide for the most effective overall community response.

3. The CERT Team Coordinator **holds a kick-off meeting** with the identified CERT Members to disseminate this “CERT Coordination Guide,” conduct initial training on the basic CERT coordination framework, and give CERT Members an opportunity to ask questions.
4. The CERT Team Coordinator **holds regular meetings with the CERT Team**. These meetings can be to conduct training, make specific team plans such as pre-designating leadership roles to team members, conduct a drill/exercise, etc. As a general guideline, CERT Team meetings should occur **at least twice per year** and more frequently as needed. However, coordinators should be sensitive to what might constitute “too many” meetings. The recommended number of meetings for a CERT Team is 2-4 per year.

CERT Team Operations

This section describes basic CERT Team operations to be used by each CERT Team in Salt Lake City.

CERT Operations Policies

These policies guide team operations and should be followed at all levels:

1. **Unity of Command:** Each CERT Member has only one person from whom he or she takes direction. In other words, each CERT Member has only one supervisor.
2. **Span of Control:** Each supervisor has 3-7 people who report to him or her, the optimal number being 5.
3. **Rescuer safety is the number one concern.** To ensure rescuer safety, continually size up the situation and its hazards.
4. **Do the greatest good for the greatest number of people according to the team's capability and training.**

Basic Objectives of CERT Operations

The basic objectives of the CERT Team are to:

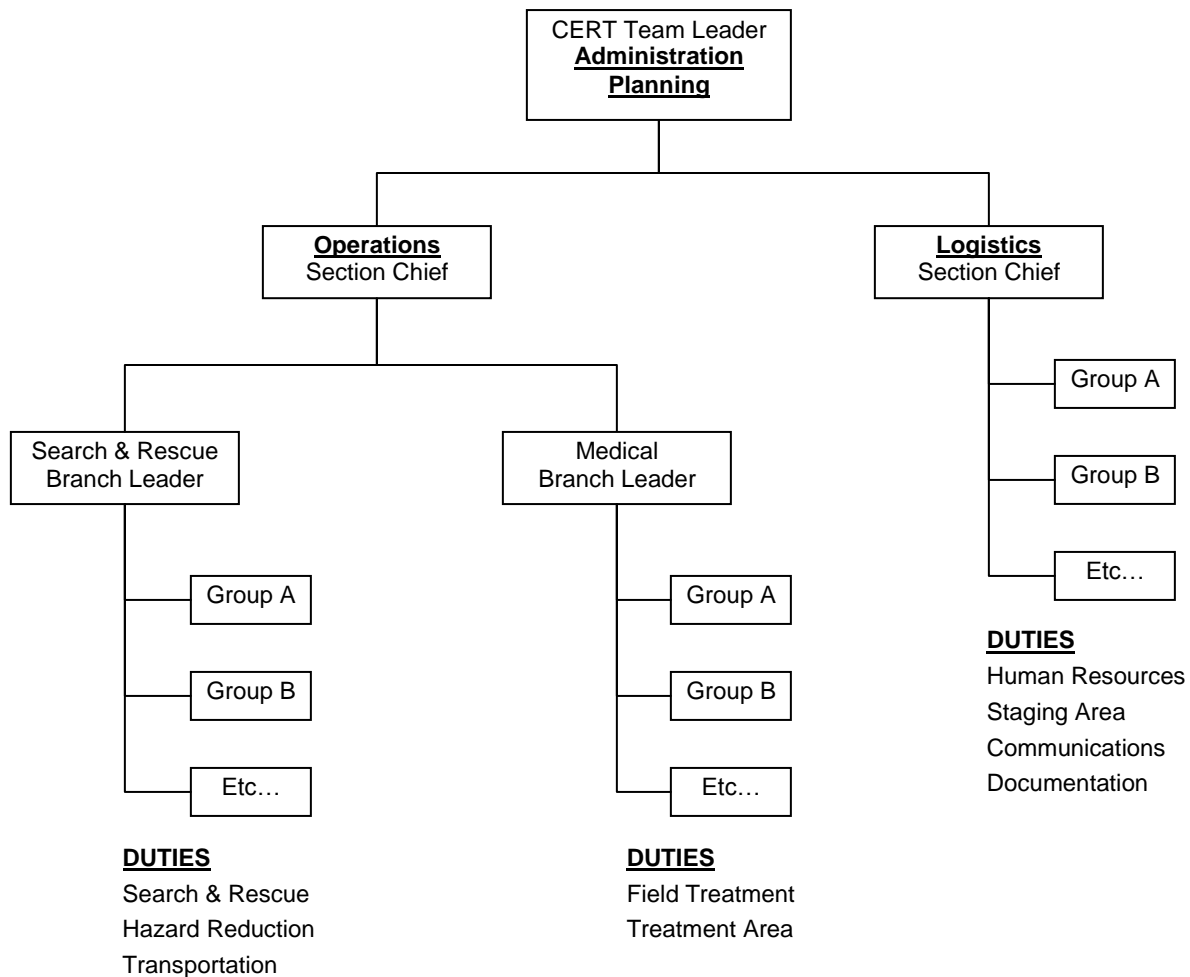
1. Assess the situation (What is the problem?)
2. Determine an overall team strategy (What can we do, and how will we do it?)
3. Deploy groups and resources (Who is going to do what?)
4. Document actions and results (What have we done and what are we doing?)
5. Continually assess the situation and respond according to the needs of the moment (Now, what is the problem and should the strategy change?)

CERT Team Organization

The following figure illustrates the basic CERT Team organization to be used by CERT Teams in Salt Lake City. This particular organization utilizes the terminology from the Incident Command System (ICS), a system used by fire and law enforcement agencies to manage emergency operations. This provides a common terminology to allow all people involved in emergency response efforts to quickly understand the organization of a CERT Team. For example, a CERT Member should be able to join the efforts of any CERT Team in Salt Lake City and already have an understanding of the basic organization of that team. The ICS basic command structure has four sections: **Operations, Logistics, Administration, and Planning**. These four sections are represented in the following figure.

In the basic CERT Team structure, Operations and Logistics each have a section staffed by CERT Members while Administration and Planning are handled by the CERT Team Leader. The Administration and Planning functions of the system may be expanded into staffed sections if there is a need for it. As such, **this organization is flexible and can grow or contract as needed**. Remember to follow the Span of Control policy when expanding or contracting team organization. Following the chart are descriptions of individual group duties.

FIGURE 3: Basic CERT Team Organization & Duties



CERT Team Leader

The “**Team Leader**” is responsible for steering the general activities of the overall CERT Team by identifying the changing needs of the emergency situation and assessing the ways in which the team as-a-whole is responding to those needs with the resources available. The Team Leader is chosen out of the group of CERT members to arrive first at the command post by that same group. However, since the Team Leader should be the person best qualified to fulfill the duties of that position, the Team Leader role may pass from one individual to another when a more qualified individual arrives. The Team Leader manages Section Chiefs.

Section Chiefs

The Team Leader assigns a “**Section Chief**” to each Section. There are two sections within the basic CERT Team organization: (1) the Operations Section, and (2) the Logistics Section. As needed, the Team Leader may choose to create sections for “Administration” and “Planning” (the other two of the four basic components of the ICS basic incident command structure). The Section Chiefs manage Branch Leaders.

Branch Leaders

The Section Chief assigns a “**Branch Leader**” to each Branch formed. While the types of branches that are created within a CERT Team are flexible, the Operations Section has two basic branches: a Search & Rescue Branch and a Medical Branch. The Branch Leader sees that individual branch duties are accomplished through small teams called “groups” assigned to specific duties. Branch Leaders manage Group Leaders.

Group Leaders

The Branch Leader forms small Groups of 3-7 CERT Members, assigns each to a specific duty for which the Branch is responsible, and assigns a “Group Leader” to lead each group formed. For example: The Search & Rescue Branch in the Operations Section has the three primary responsibilities of (1) Search & Rescue, (2) Hazard Reduction, and (3) Transportation. The Search & Rescue Branch Leader might choose to create 10 groups of 3 people each to conduct door-to-door search and rescue, 2 groups of 3 people each to conduct hazard reduction, and 1 group of 7 people to conduct transportation. The Branch Leader assigns a Group Leader to lead each Group. Because the Branch Leader cannot effectively manage 13 Group Leaders, the Branch Leader can create a manageable span of control by assigning “**Sub-Branch Leaders**” to provide mid-level supervision over the 13 Group Leaders. In this case, the Branch Leader can assign 2 Sub-Branch Leaders to oversee 5 Search & Rescue Group Leaders each, resulting in the following CERT Team chain of command:

FIGURE 4: CERT Team Chain of Command

CERT Team Leader
Section Chiefs
Branch Leaders
(Sub-Branch Leaders, *as needed*)
Group Leaders

A useful way to remember the basic CERT Team building blocks in order is to remember “See, the branch grew!” which corresponds to Section-Branch-Group.

Operations & Logistics Duties/Responsibilities

Following are descriptions of the responsibilities pre-assigned to the Operations and Logistics Sections in the basic CERT Team organization.

OPERATIONS SECTION

The Operations Section is responsible for the Search & Rescue Branch, the Medical Branch, and all other field work undertaken by the CERT Team.

Search & Rescue Branch

The Search & Rescue Branch has three primary responsibilities: (1) Search & Rescue, (2) Hazard Reduction, and (3) Transportation. Following are general descriptions for each:

- 1) Search & Rescue:
 - a) travel door-to-door to rapidly assess the status of the occupants of every structure in the area
 - b) identify people who are Immediate, Delayed, and Dead and perform simple treatment for the three killers—Airway, Bleeding, Shock (ABS)
 - c) record the status of each structure and communicate which structures have people labeled “Immediate” to the Medical Section for field treatment
 - d) perform light rescue activities when the rescuer safety can be assured
- 2) Hazard Reduction:
 - a) perform fire suppression on small fires that are manageable with the equipment available
 - b) identify other hazards (such as broken glass and gas leaks) and devise and carry out safe methods of reducing danger to the community
- 3) Transportation:
 - a) provide transportation for team members, the wounded, the dead, and for other needs as the situation requires

Medical Branch

The Medical Branch has two primary responsibilities: (1) Field Treatment, and (2) the Treatment Area. Following are general descriptions for each:

1) Field Treatment:

- a) follow the Search & Rescue Branch by going to locations with people who have been labeled by Search & Rescue as “Immediate” and provide CERT-level medical treatment to those victims
- b) determine the amount of professional medical help available (hospitals, clinics, community members with professional training) and what victims will receive it
- c) treat the “Immediates” in their homes unless the team determines it will be more efficient to create a treatment area at the command post location
- d) if possible, leave at least one person to care for each “Immediate” (this can be a capable family member or a team member)
- e) determine when and how the “Delayed” will receive medical attention

2) Treatment Area:

- a) if the team determines it will be more efficient to create a treatment area at the command post location than to treat victims in their homes, initiate a Treatment Area
- b) work with the Search & Rescue Branch to safely transport victims to the Treatment Area
- c) conduct bed-to-bed treatment of the “Immediates”
- d) determine when and how the “Delayed” will receive medical attention

LOGISTICS SECTION

The Logistics Section has three primary responsibilities: (1) Human Resources, (2) the Staging Area, (3) Communications, and (4) Documentation. Following are general descriptions for each:

1) Human Resources:

- a) conduct the in-take and assignment of both CERT-trained and non-trained volunteers to individual sections
- b) track assignments with documentation, having a constant knowledge of how many people are assigned to each section
- c) if needed, institute work shifts

2) Staging Area:

- a) maintain command post/staging area that is free from hazards, clean, and sanitized
- b) identify and label locations for various command/staging functions and basic needs including places for people to rest, eat, and use the restroom
- c) maintain a minimum-service shelter to meet the basic needs of the “delayed treatment” group of victims awaiting assistance and those residents whose dwelling units are unfit to

occupy (remember that you are not a full-functioning Red Cross shelter and that some of the residents at your facility may need to eventually be transferred to one)

- d) manage all available medical supplies, sheltering supplies, tools, food, water, and other resources; identify shortages and work to fill them

3) Communications:

- a) provide the most effective means of communication possible using mediums including but not limited to ham radio, two-way radio, telephone, cell phone, written notes, and runners
- b) at the direction of CERT leadership, communicate with your team's Quadrant Coordinator and other external groups on behalf of the CERT
- c) monitor the media for information useful to the CERT

4) Documentation:

- a) document situation status for the Command Post; include incident locations, access routes, identified hazards, locations of all team functions, human resource assignments
- b) provide CERT Team forms that the team has chosen to use (visit www.cert-la.com for example forms you can print)

Basic CERT Principles

This summary includes many of the principles and techniques taught in CERT training. It is intended to be used as a resource. It does not substitute for formal Refresher Training.

Activating with the CERT Team:

1. Get your gear.
2. Response to your local command post.
3. Command will assign you.

Fire Suppression:

On fires not larger than a garbage can, use the buddy system and PASS the fire extinguisher at the fire base: **Point, Aim, Shoot, Sweep.**

Light Search & Rescue:

Make rescuer safety your primary concern. Always use the buddy system.

1. Take a lap around the building to identify the level of damage to the structure. Can a search and rescue operation be safely attempted by CERT members?
 - a. **If not**, only call out into the structure, and do not enter it.
 - b. **If so**, (1) be systematic; (2) call out—"If anyone can hear my voice, come here;" (3) stop and listen carefully; and (4) triangulate to see all angles of the situation.

To mark searched buildings and rooms, make a single '/' (slash) when entering; create an 'X' when all occupants have been removed. Put a box around the 'X' if it is not safe to enter the building or room.

When performing a rescue, create a safe rescue environment by removing fallen debris and shoring up precarious walls. Triage and stabilize the victim as soon as possible. Think of the best way of removing a victim rather than "jumping in" haphazardly. Always assume that a victim has a spinal injury until you find evidence to the contrary.

Triage & Simple Treatment:

Goal: Do the most good for the greatest amount of people in the least amount of time.

Perform triage by checking ABS: **Airway, Bleeding, Shock.**

Airway: At an arm's distance, shake the victim and shout. If the victim does not respond: position the airway by the head-tilt/chin-lift method and check for obstructions; look, listen, feel; and check breathing rate.

Bleeding: Take immediate action to control severe bleeding. Put pressure at the point of the wound and/or at pressure points. Elevate the wound above the level of the heart. Do all of this quickly, remembering that you are only doing simple treatment during triage.

Shock: Shock is the state whereby the body is unable to supply enough oxygen to meet tissue needs. (1) Check the mental status of the victim by giving a simple command such as “squeeze my hand.” (2) Look for rapid but weak pulse and respiration. Abnormally rapid respiration (above 30 per minute) indicates shock. (3) Check for adequate circulation by performing the Blanch Test: press on the skin until normal skin color is gone and time how long it takes for normal color to return. A capillary refill time of greater than 2 seconds indicates the need for immediate treatment. Also, unconsciousness or a rapid but weak pulse and respiration require immediate attention.

Perform simple treatment to stabilize these three killers. Sort victims into three categories for treatment: Immediate (**I**), Delayed (**D**), Dead (**DEAD**). *Triage should take less than one minute per victim!*

Medical Treatment:

Attend to “I” or “Immediate” victims first. First, perform a head-to-toe assessment, checking the following body parts from top to bottom: (1) head, (2) neck, (3) shoulders, (4) chest, (5) arms, (6) abdomen, (7) pelvis, (8) legs, and (9) back. Talk to the victim to assess consciousness and to gather information about injuries. *Head-to-toe assessments should take less than one minute per victim!* Perform treatment on a victim’s injuries according to highest priority until he/she is stable enough to be considered “D” or “Delayed.” Then move on.

Help Others Cope:

The emotional trauma, or stress, of a disaster can be the biggest challenge. Here are a few suggestions to help others cope:

1. Listen intently to a victim’s physical and emotional concerns.
2. Take emotions seriously, regardless of how illogical or exaggerated disaster victims’ perceptions may be. Validate victims’ emotions by reassuring them that their emotions are natural and that many people have similar feelings.
3. Give victims a sense of control by helping them help themselves and others.
4. Give victims hope by maintaining an attitude of realistic optimism. Speak truthfully about the reality of the disaster that has just occurred but remain optimistic for the future, both near and far.

