



City of Fort Worth, Texas

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

Standard Operating Procedures

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**Fort Worth Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)
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Mission:

In keeping with national Homeland Security initiatives, the primary mission of Fort Worth CERT is to assist the local community in being self-sufficient in the aftermath of a major disaster when professional first responders (police, fire, EMS, etc.) are overwhelmed or unable to respond. When deployed, CERT(s) can provide limited emergency response until first responders arrive, and can then assist as directed. A secondary mission of CERT(s) is to provide trained volunteers to supplement law enforcement, fire service, emergency medical or other governmental department when additional staffing is needed for crowd or traffic control, search operations, special events and other public safety activities. CERT(s) will be trained to first help themselves, their family and then their community during times of emergencies or disasters. This training will allow CERT members to perform essential, non-technical functions, and assist first responders in the event of an emergency.

Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to establish policies and procedures for members and their training, activation, activities, and coordination as the City of Fort Worth Community Emergency Response Team (hereinafter FW CERT) as sponsored by the Fort Worth Police Department.

No policy or procedure manual can anticipate every circumstance or question about policy. As Fort Worth CERT continues to grow, the need may arise and the Fort Worth Police Department reserves the right to revise, supplement, or rescind any policies, procedures, practices, or benefits from time to time as it deems appropriate, in its sole and absolute discretion. Such changes will be communicated through official channels and additionally will be posted on the FW CERT website at <http://www.certfortworth.org>.

Recruitment:

Applicants living and working in the city of Fort Worth will receive first priority in recruitment and training. Admission to a CERT Basic training class does not guarantee a position on a CERT team, nor does it obligate a citizen to be a CERT member. The philosophy is that any citizen receiving CERT training is a much better prepared citizen. Membership/Dismissal from the program is at the will of the coordinator.

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Training:

CERT classes will consist of approximately 24 hours training and an additional disaster exercise. The lesson plan will be based on FEMA Community Emergency Response Team curriculum, and additional topics may be included based on local hazards and operations. To be a qualified team member, attendees must complete the entire program. The CERT Coordinator may make exceptions on an individual basis. It is the responsibility of the CERT Coordinator to maintain records of training and team membership.

A Texas DPS Division of Emergency Management Certified Train the Trainer (CERT TTT) or Certified Master Instructor (CMI) must be present to monitor each session where the instructor is not a Certified Train the Trainer or CERT Master Instructor to ensure the program is adhered to and all necessary topics are covered.

For Category 2 and above membership, graduates will be required to complete all four of the online Incident Command/National Incident Management System courses (IS-100, IS-200, IS-700, IS-800). This ensures that all team members will have the foundational knowledge to properly function within an Incident Command System environment.

Assisting with local events is both a public service and team training event.

Membership:

Requirements:

In order for an individual to become a member of Fort Worth CERT, he or she must meet the following minimum criteria:

1. Must be at least eighteen (18) years of age
2. Possess a valid driver's license
3. Required to submit to initial (and subsequent) background investigations
4. Must complete and sign all necessary forms, releases, and agreements
5. Willingness to complete of the FEMA Required Basic CERT Training

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Categories of Membership:

There are three categories of FW-CERT membership:

Category 1 (Basic):

Composed of individuals who have not yet completed the FEMA Required Basic CERT Training, and who want to be better prepared for and respond to disasters in their own neighborhood, work, school, or recreational surroundings. They are not interested in on-going training or in being a part of any CERT related community service projects. Their knowledge helps the whole community be better prepared in the event of an Emergency or Disaster. They are encouraged to sign up for the Fort Worth Texas Alerts notification platform. For these members, FW CERT will not provide clothing or equipment, and these members are not authorized to participate in field based events.

Category 2 (Graduates):

Composed of individuals who have completed the CERT Basic Training class, who meet certain minimum FEMA required courses, and who maintain current levels of minimum training. Graduate members are encouraged to take part frequently in community service and outreach events, and may be called upon to respond should a local or national emergency arise. They must sign up for the Fort Worth Texas Alerts notification platform.

Category 3 (Advanced):

Composed of individuals selected by the CERT Coordinator who have been Category 2 (Graduate) members for at least 12 months. These individuals must commit to attending ongoing training, and maintain currency as specified for various areas of training and all skills related to response. These members are expected to complete at least 3 documented CERT events each calendar quarter and are required to sign up for the Fort Worth Texas Alerts notification platform. This category of membership is required in order to be a FW-CERT Instructor.

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Commitment:

Category 2 (Graduate) Members must agree to be an active member for at least one year.

Category 3 (Advanced) members must commit to assisting at three or more community events each calendar year, and must also complete three of four quarterly training opportunities each year.

All members must maintain contact with the program and advise immediately of any change of contact information or availability for deployment.

Organization and Responsibilities:

In keeping with the Incident Command organizational framework, the CERT organization is flexible so that it can expand or contract depending on the on-going assessment of priorities determined by the Incident Commander and/or CERT Coordinator, along with the personnel and resources available. The CERT Coordinator is the final authority for all actions.

For a limited operation, CERT deployment may be as small as a single Search and Rescue Team. For major disasters or large scale emergency, the entire CERT organization may be deployed. No matter the size of the deployment, the CERT organization falls under the command and control of the Incident Commander (IC) (fire, law enforcement or EMS). In the early stages of an incident, this could be the first police officer, fire officer or paramedic to arrive. As a situation develops, the CERT organization would be formally incorporated into the Incident Command structure.

When necessary due to the scope of the operation, or the lack of first responders, CERT will form its own Incident Command Structure until professional responders arrive. In this case the Team Leader on scene will serve as the IC. Upon the arrival of first responders and their establishment of ICS, the CERT organization will be brought into the system and command and control functions will be turned over to first responder IC.

Team Leaders and Instructors will be selected from the membership for their dedication, abilities, knowledge, and experience by the CERT Coordinator.

Equipment:

Each CERT Basic Class Graduate, who is a member of FW CERT, will be issued an ID Card indicating their date of graduation. This ID card is for meeting admittance and proof of course completion purposes.

After meeting all training requirements, Category 2 (Graduate) members will be issued a unique color ID Card as well as a safety vest, safety helmet and an equipment bag.

Upon approval of Category 3 (Advanced) membership, such members will keep their issued membership ID and documentation will be stored internally.

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Any equipment, identification cards or clothing (hereafter equipment) issued to CERT members remains the property of the City of Fort Worth. It is the responsibility of the CERT Coordinator to recover CERT equipment if a member chooses to leave or is suspended or removed from the program by the CERT Coordinator. The CERT member will immediately return all equipment issued if they choose to leave the CERT program. Refusal or failure to return equipment may result in legal action.

Safety:

Safety of CERT members is of primary importance during all disaster, incident, or training situations. The CERT Coordinator and Team Leader(s) must account for and ensure the safety of their team members.

Clothing

All CERT members will consider location and type of incident or event, time of day, weather variations and lighting conditions during all activities. Team members will wear proper clothing and personal protective equipment. No shorts, sleeveless shirts or flip flops will be allowed. This dress code applies during training as well. Long or short sleeve shirt appropriate to current weather conditions, long pants and closed-toe shoes or boots are necessary for safety. The reflective Vest provided will be worn at all times on all outdoor operations. Any variations for special circumstances will be communicated to Team members by the CERT Coordinator.

Weapons Policy

Members may not carry any weapon while functioning in any capacity as a CERT member, even if legally authorized to do so.

Vehicular Equipment

No vehicular emergency equipment, including light, sirens, or signs are authorized.

Alcohol Use

At no time may alcoholic beverages be purchased or consumed while representing or wearing CERT equipment or clothing.

Social Media, Digital Images, Communications

Use of social media can pose legal and ethical risks to members and the organization, and can impact FW CERT's reputation and good will. It can also erode trust among community members and jeopardize the privacy and safety of members, victims, and/or their families. Any communications online may be seen by others as a reflection or representation of your character, judgement, and values and in some instances, may be perceived by others as an indirect extension of FW CERT regardless of your intent.

In the context of these realities, FW CERT has enacted the following policy:

Allowed: Taking of pictures/video at training events, special events such as Mayfest/Cowtown Marathon/Komen 5k, recruitment drives, continuing education training classes, membership meetings and Basic CERT classes or as allowed by the FWPD PIO and the CERT Coordinator.

Not allowed: The taking or sharing of photo's or videos at any Disaster Incident, Call-Out, emergency response or other Critical Incident is prohibited by FW CERT members. FW CERT members need to remember that at such scenes any and all photography (including video) is considered evidence and may be seized by the on scene investigators. Further, the sharing of this type of media on any platform could result in civil and/or criminal legal action.

The CERT coordinator, under the Fort Worth Police Department, is responsible for control and dissemination of any and all FW CERT official communications.

Activation:

The Fort Worth CERT program emphasizes a dual approach for activations:

Limited Self Activation:

Neighbor helping neighbor, as CERT Members using their CERT Training, until first response personnel or other appropriate response organizations arrive on the scene to assume responsibility.

In the event of a disaster in your immediate neighborhood (within 2 blocks of your address on record) and you are in the area, you may assist until first responders arrive, reporting to the arriving Incident Commander your size up and any actions taken. You will then follow their direction, while attempting to contact the CERT Coordinator. Completion of an After Action Report (AAR) will be required. If professional responders are on scene prior to your arrival you will clear the area.

Other than the event described above, there is no self-activation of Fort Worth CERT.

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Official Activation:

Fort Worth CERT will be activated by the Fort Worth Police Department at the request of any municipal Emergency Manager or Fire, EMS or Law Enforcement Commander, with the Fort Worth CERT Coordinators' approval.

CERT members will be included in a special category of the Fort Worth Nixle system for emergency mass notification. Once entered into the database, you will be contacted by phone, email, mobile phone and/or text message to advise you of an incident and the need for your response. It is critical to the success of the program that you keep your contact information current. At each CERT training, meeting or event you will complete an updated contact information sheet.

When officially activated, CERT can assist by:

- Conducting an initial size-up.
- Reduce immediate dangers by turning off utilities, suppressing small fires, evacuating the area, and helping others as needed.
- Providing basic first aid of the injured in the immediate area.
- Establishing a command post, staging area and medical triage and treatment areas.
- Collecting damage information and developing a plan of operation based on life saving priorities and available resources.
- Establishing and maintaining communication with responders
- Other duties within the scope of CERT training and capabilities

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Request for Participation and Policy Acknowledgement

I, _____, hereby request to participate in the Fort Worth Community Emergency Response Team (FW CERT) program. I understand that my participation as a FW CERT team member will involve active physical activity, which includes a potential risk of personal injury and/or personal property damage. I make this request with full knowledge of the possibility of personal injury and/or personal property damage. I understand that no insurance or compensation coverage is provided and that if medical treatment should be required, it is at my expense.

I acknowledge that in my decision to respond "at will" to emergency or disaster situations with Fort Worth CERT, it is my duty to obey all federal, state, and local laws while functioning as a CERT member. I understand that even if legally authorized to do so, I may not carry any weapon while functioning as a CERT member. No vehicular emergency equipment (light or sirens) or signs are authorized.

I understand that at no time will alcoholic beverages be consumed while representing or wearing CERT gear or clothing. There will be no meetings or social media used that is not authorized by, and under the sole control of the Fort Worth Police Department.

I agree to hold harmless the City of Fort Worth and the Fort Worth Police Department and other Emergency Services Agencies and their agents and personnel, from any and all claims, actions, suits and/or injury that I may suffer and which may arise as a result of my participation as a CERT team member.

I agree to follow the laws established by the State of Texas and rules established by Fort Worth Police Department and to exercise reasonable care while participating in the CERT program. I understand that if I fail to follow the program rules and regulations, the direct instructions of the CERT Coordinator or an Incident Commander, or if I fail to exercise reasonable care, I can be administratively removed from the program at any time.

Further, as a CERT member, I will always use due care when I am activated. I will follow the directions of the emergency response agencies and supervisors appointed over me. In the event that I am without direction from emergency response agencies or supervisors, I will perform my duties including making decisions as to the necessity of providing emergency services in a prudent and reasonable manner, within the scope of my training, at all times.

I hereby certify that I have read and fully understand the information presented in this Fort Worth Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program, Standard Operating Procedures document. By executing this release I certify that I have read this document in its entirety, understand all of its terms and have had any questions regarding the document or release or its effect satisfactorily answered. I sign this release freely and voluntarily.

_____ SIGNATURE OF CERT MEMBER	_____ PRINTED NAME OF CERT MEMBER	_____ DATE SIGNED
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