

## **CERT: Doing the Greatest Good for the Greatest Number**

**Earthquakes. Floods. Hurricanes. Tornadoes. Wildfires. Every region of the country is vulnerable to one or more destructive forces of nature. Add to the list man-made disasters such as terrorist attacks, environmental incidents, blackouts and toxic spills and many Americans may eventually find themselves dealing with the aftermath of a disaster. How well will we respond?**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) states that following a major disaster, first responders who provide fire and medical services may not be able to meet the demand for these services. Factors such as number of victims, communication failures, and road blockages may prevent people from accessing emergency services they have come to expect at a moment's notice by dialing 911. Quick and adequate government response could be especially problematic if there is no warning before the disaster strikes, as in an earthquake. In such cases, people may have to rely on each other for help in order to meet their immediate life-saving and life-sustaining needs.

Under these kinds of conditions, family members, co-workers, and neighbors spontaneously try to



help each other. This was the case following the Mexico City earthquake in 1985 where untrained volunteers saved 800 people. However, 100 people lost their lives while attempting to save others. FEMA asserts that this was too high a price to pay—and that this unnecessary loss of life could have been prevented through training.

### **Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)**

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program provides citizens with an understanding of their responsibility in preparing for disaster and trains them to meet their immediate needs. It also increases their ability to safely help themselves, their family and their neighbors in the aftermath of a disaster. CERT participants are trained in needed life-saving skills with emphasis on

decision-making skills, rescuer safety, and doing the greatest good for the greatest number.

Courses are delivered in the community by a team of trained first responders and are usually held one evening a week over a 7-week period. Classroom instruction and hands-on exercises provide training in areas such as disaster preparedness, fire suppression, disaster medical operations, light search and rescue, and team organization.

Following an event when local professional first responders are not immediately available to help, trained CERT members can give critical support to others in their neighborhood or workplace until fire and medical services arrive. When emergency personnel arrive, CERT members provide useful information to responders and support their efforts, as directed, at the disaster site.

CERT members can also assist with non-emergency projects that aim to improve the safety of the community. Montgomery County, Maryland activated its CERT volunteers on January 20th as part of the National Capital Region 2009 Inauguration Response. CERT volunteers supported emergency services and provided customer assistance at Metro rail transit stations in anticipation of over three million visitors attending the Inauguration in frigid temperatures. Prior to activation, the CERT members received supplemental training on evacuation, hypothermia, and accommodations for individuals with special needs.

## Get Trained and Get Involved

The CERT program is about readiness and people helping people in the face of disaster. The value of such training is clear, especially for security professionals. Our clients, their customers and employees, and the public often look to Securitas security officers for assistance in emergencies. Advanced emergency-response skills could be useful to you at your job and in your community.

Since 1993 when this training was made available nationally by FEMA, over 1100 communities in 28 states and Puerto Rico have conducted CERT training. You can visit the CERT Web site at <http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert> for more information and to locate a CERT program near you.

### Treating the Three Killers

In emergency and disaster situations where people are initially on their own, the actions of ordinary citizens can make a difference.

FEMA reports that the three major killers in the aftermath of a disaster are

- Airway obstruction
- Uncontrolled bleeding
- Shock

Trained CERT members can successfully treat the three killers and help save lives. CERT members are also trained to manage utilities and put out small fires; provide basic medical aid; search for and rescue victims safely; and organize themselves and spontaneous volunteers to be more effective.

This guide is for informational purposes only and does not contain Securitas USA's complete policy and procedures. For more information, contact your Securitas USA supervisor or account manager.

