

Santa Cruz County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Operating Procedures and Activation Policy (2024)

AUTHORITY

The CERT Auxiliary of Santa Cruz County is part of local and national Citizen Corps effort to incorporate and utilize volunteers in the community. Citizen Corps is endorsed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency(FEMA) under the Department of Homeland Security. CERT volunteers are trained in basic disaster response techniques to assist residents and professional responders in disaster and emergency situations. The CERT program operates under the authority of the CERT Council for policy guidance, CERT Auxiliary for management, sustainment and daily operations, Santa Cruz County Fire Agencies for training oversight and local activations, and Office of & Resilience Response, Recovery (OR3) for County-wide activation authority and support.

PURPOSE

This document establishes policy and procedural guidance for the CERT Program of Santa Cruz County regarding membership, training, activation, activities, and coordination. The CERT Council shall review these Standard Operating Procedures annually. These guidelines do not supersede or replace local, State or Federal Standard Operating procedures for Emergency Management and use of volunteers.

MISSION STATEMENT

The CERT program trains and prepares individuals neighborhoods in emergency preparedness and basic disaster response techniques focusing on critical thinking, situation awareness and flexible behavior in the face of changing conditions. This enables them to prepare, as volunteers, to take an active role in providing critical support to the OR3 and emergency service response personnel during emergencies and disasters.

NAME

The name of the non-profit organization is the CERT Auxiliary of Santa Cruz County and is the entity responsible for the CERT Program in Santa Cruz County.

GOALS

The goals of the CERT Program are:

1. To do the greatest good for the greatest amount of people.

2. To focus great effort in maintaining the safety of themselves, team members and all other survivors or rescuers.
3. To maintain team readiness through ongoing training and meetings.
4. To gain and maintain acknowledgement and respect from area professional responders and residents.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the CERT Program are establishing and maintaining cohesive groups of qualified, trained individuals who may execute the following:

1. Augment local emergency services and emergency management personnel with trained individuals.
2. Assist law enforcement functions including traffic management and security.
3. Assist survivor triage and rescue.
4. Assist with sheltering, mass feeding and other support function staffing.
5. Integrate operations with other CERTs as directed by professional responders.
6. Provide communications capability with individual CERT members and coordinate communications with other CERT Teams and Neighborhood Communication Networks.

OPERATIONS

UTILIZATION

CERT is intended for use during disasters, such as an earthquake or local area-wide emergencies where professional responders are overwhelmed and there is a need for immediate assistance to survivors. CERTs may be used for non-emergency operations if these operations relate to the safety and well-being of residents of Santa Cruz County. Examples may be:

CERT Information booths at fairs, public outreach activities, assisting at first aid tents, support to clinics, disaster surveillance and surveying neighborhoods at risk of disaster.

CERT teams may operate in a pre-determined area of operations or be directed by the Activating Agency to operate at a specific location relevant to the disaster. CERTs

should follow standard operational procedures (SOP) to prioritize helping themselves, family and immediate neighbors.

CERT volunteers should only be used in situations for which they are trained and execute tasks within the scope of their training. Many CERT volunteers have skills beyond what is taught through the CERT program (e.g., health professionals, heavy equipment operators, etc.).

While these skills may be helpful during an emergency or disaster, and may be utilized in other programs, they are outside of the CERT scope-of-practice and are not authorized activities as a CERT volunteer.

CERT volunteers may be used to assist professional public safety personnel in logistical and administrative support. They also may be used in non-disaster situations as a public safety or emergency management resource in a low-risk event or for preplanned community events.

Concept of Operations emphasizes a dual approach:

- **Limited Self-Activation:** Neighbor helping neighbor as Good Samaritan, not as CERT members, using their CERT training until County first-response personnel or other appropriate response organizations arrive on the scene to assume responsibility.
- **Official Activation:** Support to Santa Cruz County emergency response agencies as needed and under specific direction of the designated County response organizations. CERT volunteers are prohibited from self-deploying to routine emergencies in which they are not immediately involved nor requested. Such inappropriate self-deployment is a barrier to proper emergency response and may result in immediate suspension and termination.

CERTs are prohibited from self-deploying to routine emergencies in which they are not immediately involved nor requested. Such inappropriate self-deployment is a barrier to proper emergency response and may result in immediate suspension or termination.

ACTIVATION

CERT volunteers may often be notified before specific needs are determined. This is to enable local authorities the opportunity to assess the resources available, stage and

deploy these resources. CERT recognizes three levels of activation to be made by the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

Alert

This level requires no immediate response action by CERT volunteers, but advisory. CERTs are notified of an emergency management activity which **may** require CERT assistance. Text messages are sent to all members giving them a “heads up” notice via text with an email link outlining any relevant information. Further also establishing the status of volunteers as “available” or “unavailable” useful in determining response capability.

Standby

Volunteers are to prepare for full deployment within 12-24 hours and will remain on standby until notified of an assignment by text with an email link advising them of the pending situation and their availability and status is determined. CERT members should check, assemble and pack for deployment all personal equipment, supplies, radios, vehicles, kits of food, water and clothing for a 48-hour period.

Immediate Deployment

Texts notify CERTs of immediate deployment authorizing CERTs to proceed without delay to their normal assembly point or other area designated by the Office of Response, Recovery and Resilience (OR3). Once the EOC Command is operational and the CERT Incident Leader is on-scene, they will notify the appropriate contact or official with an updated status and await further instructions.

Additionally, CERT may be activated in a local area by CERT Fire or Law Manager or the Incident Commander. The activating agency will notify the County of Santa Cruz Office of Response, Recovery and Resilience (OR3) or the EOC if activated.

POLICY for PHONE APPLICATIONS

SCsurf (Santa Cruz - Simple User Reporting Form)

Intended as a CERT tool for reporting damage assessments, no immediate action will result of information reported.

Use *only* during activation by OR3 or through local fire or law agency. Important to call 911 first, then when safe for CERTs to do so, use application to report neighborhood damage assessments. Information sent to OR3 as an excel spreadsheet mapping reports by geographic areas.

Use to simply file reports in 5 categories: roads, fire/electric/gas, flooding or water issues, structure damage and other. Photos may also be attached into reports.

CERT Auxiliary will sponsor training for all CERTs, who will use application when directed to do so.

Special protocol for magnitude 5.0 and above earthquakes. In this case CERTs have limited self-activation and *if safe to do so* will report neighborhood damage assessments. Further understanding that this is for reporting the current situation, and no immediate action will be expected of reports.

Knock and Talk

Use *only* for activation by OR3 for reporting direct public outreach allowing documentation of CERT Team contact with individuals and neighborhoods canvassed.

UPON ACTIVATION

During an emergency/disaster, CERT member activation must be approved by the by CERT Fire or Law Manager, OR3 or the Incident Commander (IC). The activating agency will notify Emergency Services or the EOC if activated.

All CERTs must have a current Disaster Service Worker (DSW) Badge and always display the badge. CERT volunteers without a current DSW Badge must be sworn in before being deployed may be sworn in by those deputized by the County Clerk with this authority. The DSW program provides California Workman's Compensation during activation for injury in line of duty (*See reference in DSW guidelines and incident form in Appendix A*)

The CERT Lead documents information regarding the extent of activation of all CERT members volunteers on ICS Form 214-Unit Log and each CERT volunteer signs-in and signs-out on a Daily Volunteer Time Log. This information needs to be returned to the Team Leader at the conclusion of the operational period. At a minimum, this information should include:

- Name and contact information CERT member and badge number of CERT member.
- Time and Location of Activation

- Assignments given, and actions taken.
- Any outcomes, positive or negative, including injuries sustained with the appropriate paperwork filed (incident form, Appendix A).
- Time and Location of Deactivation (when relevant).

CERTs must operate within the scope of their CERT training, as well as comply with all federal, state, and local laws when functioning as a CERT member.

When activated, CERTs under the age of 18 shall remain at the Incident Command Post. Minors are not permitted to participate in CERT field team activities during a disaster.

Any CERT member who suffers an injury while performing an assigned CERT task must immediately report the injury to their supervisor who will pass it through the chain of command. If the injury is severe, contact 911 and then contact immediate supervisor. Once the emergency has been resolved, the supervising Team Leader will deactivate the CERT members/teams and make appropriate notifications. **(Relevant forms see Appendix A)**

DEACTIVATION

CERT volunteers are immediate responders willing to help when there is a crisis. In some cases, CERT members set up the operation then train unaffiliated volunteers to take over when the disaster or local emergency moves to a sustainment posture. At that point CERTs should be deactivated.

CERT members will be deactivated by EOC leadership, designee, or CERT Coordinator irrespective of how they were activated. They will ensure all volunteers are accounted for and information is forwarded to the proper official.

Documentation created during activation should be organized and provided through the chain of command to the EOC and Fire/Law Manager in local activations and retained by the CERT Planning section in the event questions arise.

Any borrowed equipment should be returned to the initial location or staging area. Damaged or used resources should be documented and returned, if possible.

Injury information should be provided to the deactivating agency.

MEETING TIMES AND LOCATIONS

The CERT Team Liaison or Team Leader will meet with the CERT Fire Managers or his/her designee, at least four times per year.

CERT Teams shall establish a goal of four meetings based on CERT Team availability. Meetings will provide for both training and the distribution of general information. *(Individual Branch addendums for meeting frequency may vary by location).*

CODE OF CONDUCT

CERT members shall follow the CERT Auxiliary Code of Conduct. **(Appendix B)**

CERTs are volunteers and when activated serve at the discretion of OR3, Law and Santa Cruz County Fire Agencies

MEMBERSHIP

Citizens, non-citizens, and residents from the County of Santa Cruz area may apply to be a member of the County of Santa Cruz CERT Program and the CERT Auxiliary. CERTs living in another County, yet are part of a Team in Santa Cruz County may also apply as well as those who work in Santa Cruz County.

Volunteer applicants must be at least 16 years of age to apply. Those who are 16-18 will need the approval of the legal guardian.

Applicant approval is at the sole discretion of the County of Santa Cruz Clerk designee. The Santa Cruz County OR3 shall maintain the roster of those with active DSW badges in the CERT Program and monitor continuing education requirements.

PRIVACY POLICY

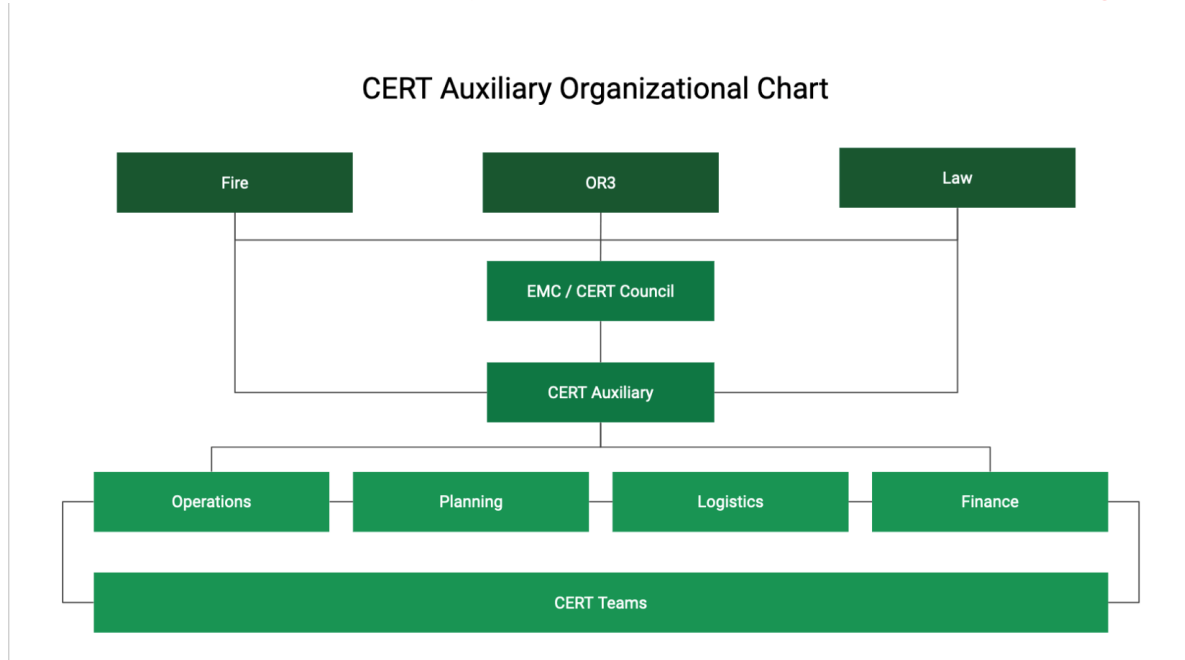
The County of Santa Cruz OES, CERT Auxiliary, CERT Fire and Law Manager, and the CERT Team Leaders, shall respect the confidentiality of any personal information members provide. County of Santa Cruz shall maintain contact information (including home addresses, email, and phone number) and will only release phone numbers and email addresses to Fire Law Managers, Branch leaders and other appropriate team members for the purpose of communicating about CERT related topics, or as otherwise required by law. At any time, a CERT member may choose to become inactive and will not be contacted unless they request reinstatement.

LOCATION

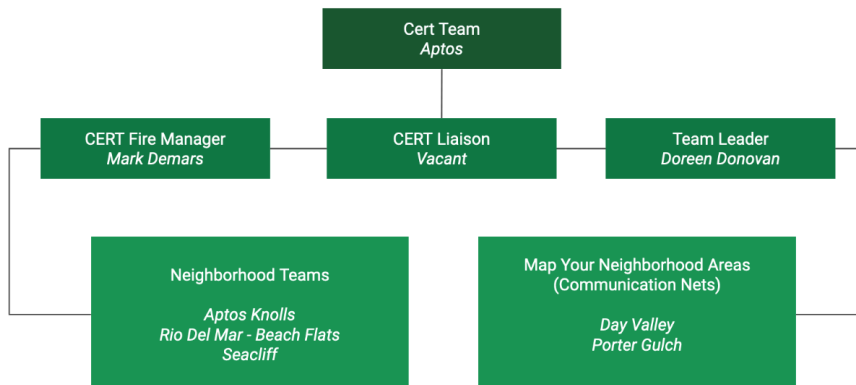
located at 5200 Soquel Avenue, Building C, Second Floor, Santa Cruz, CA.95060.

CERT Auxiliary is located at 308 Park Dr. Aptos, CA 95003. If a member leaves the CERT Program for any reason, DSW identification shall be returned to the CERT Team Leader or OR3.

ORGANIZATION CHART (Needs to be revised find John C training module)



Team Local Organizational (Non-Deployment)



CERT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

CERT MEMBER

Take steps to prepare themselves, their families, and their communities for disaster.

Take part in a drill or exercise at least once per year and complete a minimum of 25 hours of continuing education prior to re-certification every five years.

Verify contact information and DSW Badge information at least once a year.

Follow CERT Levels of Participation as outlined in Appendix C.

Assist emergency personnel and OR3 when requested in accordance with these Standard Operating Procedures.

CERT TEAM LEADER

Responsible for direct management of CERT volunteers within a local area working with a specific Santa Cruz County Fire Agency.

CERT Basic graduate, attending continuing education courses, and maintaining Disaster Service Worker certification.

Attend CERT Working Group or Team Leader meetings, if available (or designee) and provide the CERT Auxiliary updates on team activities, and prepare/provide annual data on Teams, as requested.

Have consistent access to the internet, email and cell phone and other technologies.

Regular meeting/training opportunities for their Team.

Document and maintain attendance for all meetings/training/drills, monitor DSW Badges and Branch roster, and Branch documentation, Code of Conduct, Participation Levels, etc.)

Identify Team member skills and mentor Team members.

Develop Team organizational structure and delegate, where possible (see example pg. 8)

Communicate regularly with CERT Fire Manager and develop internal communications with Team members and external communications with community allies.

Maintain materials/supplies for Team activation. Other duties as assigned

CERT Team Liaison(s)

Appointed by Team Leader with concurrence of CERT Fire Manager and be a CERT member.

Meet with CERT Leaders and CERT Fire Manager, as necessary.

This is the single point of contact between the CERT Manager and their area CERT Teams.

The role of CERT Liaison is administrative in nature, not operational in emergency situations.

Comply with the standards established in these Operations Procedures and Activation Policy.

CERT FIRE MANAGER

Provide oversight of CERT Team activities.

Establish a working relationship with Team Leader and schedule meetings quarterly. Meetings will provide an opportunity to discuss Team training, education, and the distribution of general information.

Attend CERT Council meetings (or designee).

When Teams have special requirements outside of those listed in this SOP, location specific addendums for the SOP are to be submitted in writing to the CERT Council.

IDENTIFICATION AND APPAREL

CERT identification must be always worn on the outermost garment. If the card is lost, it will be the responsibility of the team member to request a replacement through their CERT Team Leader.

In emergency situations, members must wear the issued CERT vest and hard-hat. Members need to dress for the conditions and should always wear long pants and

closed-toed shoes. During non-emergency situations, members may wear other purchased clothing containing the CERT logo. It is the responsibility of the team member to maintain all garments in a presentable manner. Authorized CERT vest and hard hat will only be worn during DSW authorized activities.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Each CERT member will be issued the following required equipment, and PPE. The suggested supplements are a list of equipment that is nice to have but not required.(equipment must be properly maintained and readily available for response.

Members must bring equipment to the staging area):

REQUIRED:

- CERT vest
- CERT DSW Badge
- CERT helmet with chin strap
- Paper and pen/pencil

OTHER:

- Goggles
- Dust Mask (N95)
- Leather work gloves
- Personal First Aid Kit
- Whistle
- Israeli Bandage (pressure dressing)
- Flashlight(s) w/batteries
- Glow stick
- Duct tape
- Gas/water shutoff tool

SUGGESTED SUPPLEMENTS:

- CERT Field Operations Guide
- MURS Radio
- Carabineers
- Lumber crayon or markers
- Utility Knife
- EMT Shears or scissors
- Latex Gloves
- Hat (sun protection)

- Multi-tool
- Bottled water
- Food (energy bars)

TRAINING

The CERT training provided to members is in accordance with the current FEMA A and California Citizen's Corps/ California Volunteer guidelines.

Each CERT member will receive a book or digital copy of the CERT Basic Training Participant Manual.

All county wide training shall be listed on the CERT Auxiliary website:

<https://santacruzcountycert.org/> registration can also be accomplished on the website.

Training topics, subject matter or activities not covered by the FEMA Community Emergency Response Team Program must be approved by the CERT Auxiliary or specific CERT Fire Manager prior to undertaking.

RECERTIFICATION

Active CERT status involves ongoing participation by attendance at Team meetings and trainings, Countywide trainings, individual study, and other activities deemed appropriate by responsible Team Leader.

Recertification (necessary every 5 years) involves:

- New DSW form signed and verified by individual deputized by the County Clerk.
- Photograph
- A minimum of 25 hours of continuing education (documented) in 5 years with the suggestion of completing at least 5 hours per year including FEMA IS100 and IS200 (in 2025).
- The Team Leader is responsible for tracking member's 5-year expiration date. CERTs are accountable for requesting recertification within the last year before DSW Badge expiration.

Uncertified status: Individuals are expected to complete the appropriate recertification activities over 5 years. CERT members will be moved to inactive status for failing to do so. They will be ineligible for activation as a CERT volunteer and treated as a spontaneous volunteer in an emergency. To reengage as a CERT volunteer, they must

demonstrate mastery of Basic CERT knowledge and skills by documented online or in-person training.

Basic CERT Training class completion: While completing all modules during the regular course of instruction is preferable, individuals will have one year from the end of the course to complete missed modules. All modules in the Basic CERT course taught throughout the County may be used as make-up. Students must sign-in on the class roster. After completion of all modules will receive completion certificate.

Online CERT Training is an additional option. Website location is <https://csti-ca.csod.com>. The modules may be completed in any order and at the individual's own pace. Students will receive certification of completion when successfully passing the final exam.

FINANCES

All funds received by County of Santa Cruz CERT Auxiliary Teams, including, but not limited: to grant awards, donations, and proceeds from fundraising activities, shall be deposited with and managed by the CERT Auxiliary Finance Chief.

- All financial requests shall be submitted verbally or in in writing to CERT Auxiliary Finance Chief.
- Approved, invoices, receipts, and purchase documentation shall be provided to CERT Auxiliary Finance Chief for reimbursement.
- Expenses during activation are *NOT anticipated* and should only be considered during extreme circumstances. All expenses are paid out of pocket and then submitted for reimbursement with a paid invoice.
 1. Identify the item needed, verify that it is not in the inventory, and an explanation of why it is needed.
 2. If a team is isolated, check with other teams and division sites for availability
 3. Present your proposal to the CERT lead on site.
 4. The CERT lead can authorize spending up to \$100 per operational period.
 5. Expenditures in excess of the authorized amount must be approved by either the director (or deputy) of logistics or operations, depending on the goods/services needed, up to \$300.
 6. Any proposed expense in excess of the spending limit of \$300 require approval of the Finance Chief.

PRINTED MEDIA, ELECTRONIC/SOCIAL MEDIA, AND INTERVIEWS
CERT Auxiliary will follow the Santa Cruz County, Social Media Policy when under activation orders. CERT Auxiliary PIO is the primary point of contact for all interviews and communications.

ADDENDUMS

To address specific needs or future topics, addendums may be added to these Operations Procedures and Activation Policy by CERT Fire Managers and Team Leaders with specific requirements and policies for their Team. Location specific addendums must be submitted in writing to CERT Council and may not deviate from the SOP as outlined.

Appendix A

Disaster Service Worker (DSW) guidance (attached) and forms (attached)

The Disaster Service Worker Volunteer Program (DSWVP) Guidance is revised effective October 2016 and replaces the April 6, 2001, version. This Document will be revised as regulations are amended or other significant changes are deemed appropriate. <https://www.caloes.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/Admin-Services/Documents/2.-DSW-Program-GUIDANCE-10.2016.pdf>

WORKERS' COMPENSATION CLAIM PROCEDURES (pg. 41 of the DSW Guide)

- State Fund Form e3301 (pg. 42 of the DSW Guide) (injured person to complete within 1 working day) and Employer Report of Injury Form—e3067 (organization to complete within 5 calendar days) [The Supervisor's Role in \(ca.gov\)](#)
- Volunteer Instructions
- Supervisor Instructions
- Example: Completed e3301 Form
- Submit by fax to the State Fund or call (888) 222-3211 to file a verbal claim (this expedites the claim initiation). A State Fund Adjuster will respond within 3 days and request any other information necessary.

Appendix B

CODE OF CONDUCT

Joining a CERT Team:

- In CERT, there is a job for everyone, regardless of age*, gender, race, religion, or disability. All who can successfully qualify for CERT are welcome to participate.
- Following the completion of FEMA's 21-hour CERT Basic Training, one is eligible to join a team of similarly trained volunteers.
- ***Age:** Must be a minimum of 16 years of age. Persons under 18 must have signed parental permission to participate in CERT.

Santa Cruz County CERT Auxiliary Code of Conduct

As a member of Santa Cruz County CERT, you are a representative of the CERT program to new members, to the public, to our supporting agencies and to the people to whom we render our services. In this capacity, you must act with integrity.

- Treat everyone with respect and courtesy.
- Treat all property according to the rules of the law.
- Be sensitive to diversity of the branch members and those assisted.
- Respect the privacy of persons served (clients), and hold in confidence all sensitive, private, and personal information.
- Avoid inappropriate public conduct that would discredit CERT.
- Any illegal or improper conduct on the part of a member may be cause for termination from the program. The decision of your CERT Team Leader, CERT Fire Manager or Program Manager and sponsoring agency will be final.
- Examples of inappropriate conduct: offensive behavior (actions, gestures, and words), impairment due to drunkenness or the influence of drugs or medications, misuse of social media concerning CERT, or jeopardizing anyone's safety.

I have read and understand the Santa Cruz County CERT Code of Conduct, and I agree to abide by the provisions during my affiliation as a Volunteer with all CERT Programs in Santa Cruz County.

Appendix C

CERT Participation Levels

CERT Trained – *Ineligible for Activation*

These are class participants who have chosen not to apply to join a CERT Team during a disaster but will respond under the Good Samaritan Law helping family and neighbors.

They may identify themselves as CERT trained, but not as active CERTs.

Mandatory

- Complete the 21-hour FEMA certified CERT Basic Training Course
- No DSW Badge

Active Responder – *Eligible for activation*

CERT Branch member

Mandatory

- Complete CERT Basic Training
- Be sworn in as an Disaster Service Worker (DSW)

Required for Recertification

- Complete 25 hours of Continuing Education
- Annually attend at least one team meeting or drill
- Complete the following online courses (training.fema.gov/is/)
 - IS100c -- Basic Incident Command System
 - IS200b-- ICS for Single Resource and Initial Actions Incidents (in 2025)

Suggested:

- IS700 – Introduction to the National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- Join a CERT Team, if possible
- Complete Advanced Training Modules

Leadership – *eligible for activation*

Assume a leadership position and /or complete additional training.

Mandatory

- All requirements and recommendations for Active Responder
- Attend leadership meetings, training classes, and exercises
- Active participation in a leadership role – CERT Auxiliary Board Director
Team Leader, CERT instructor, Auxiliary Command/General Staff
- Complete Advanced Training Modules

Optional

- CPR/First Aid/AED class

- Shelter Fundamentals and Shelter Simulation (American Red Cross)
- CERT Animal Response I and II (IS 10, IS11)
- MURS Communications Basic and Advanced
- Traffic Safety Management (Classroom) and Hands -on
- PG&E Utility Safety
- Stop the Bleed
- CERT Instructor Train the Trainer
- Amateur Radio License

Ineligible

Those removed for violation of the Code of Conduct.