**Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) General Outreach Plan**

Connecting with Local Responders

To be an effective organization, CERT **must** connect with local emergency responders. This includes fire departments, law enforcement and emergency medical services. Contact the heads of these different agencies and departments to let them know how CERT can supplement the work of their organization:

* Explain the training that CERT members receive: disaster preparedness, (small) fire suppression, basic medical operations, team operations and light search and rescue;
* Describe the personal protection equipment that CERT members use;
* Remind emergency response leaders of the Good Samaritan Laws that protect civilians trying to aid others in good faith (in case there are legal concerns).
* Arrange a date and time to present information about CERT to the whole organization. The PowerPoint presentation included in this toolkit is a good place to start.

Coordinating with Local Responders

After introducing CERT to these local organizations,

* Work with each of the emergency response leaders to craft concrete plans for the different emergency scenarios under each organizations’ purview and how CERT can assist. This will include the initial contact for mobilizing CERT: who calls who, on what phone line and basic instructions.
* Establish what CERT **can** and **cannot** do for each scenario; many of these items will be dictated by proper training and procedure, but it’s important that CERT members know their exact roles when a disaster strikes.

Connecting with the Community in Non-Emergency Roles

**CERT is not limited to emergency response**. CERT is a group of volunteers who care about the safety and well-being of a community, and those interests can still be served outside moments of crisis. Education and outreach are excellent activities for a local CERT to pursue in addition to training and disaster response. Here are a few other ways to help the community:

* Contact local event organizers and offer to provide crowd control, direct traffic/parking or offer manpower. These events can include, but are not limited to:
  + Fairs and Festivals (4H, County/City Fairs)
  + Concert venues (musical, theatre productions, etc.)
  + Sports events (school or professional)
  + Parades
* Distribute and/or install smoke alarms to assist the elderly and people with disabilities;
* Visit local high school classes to talk about the different ways students and teachers can get involved in public safety;
* Participate in training exercises as role players;
* Clean equipment for emergency responders;
* Distribute preparedness materials by setting up booths at local festivals and conferences;
* Volunteer with the local Habitat for Humanity;
* Help local volunteer fire departments with their fundraisers (fish fries, chicken barbeques, spaghetti dinners, etc.).

Sharing the CERT Message

The local media – TV stations, radio stations, and newspapers – are useful channels for keeping the community informed about CERT activities.

* Develop and cultivate healthy relationships with members of the local media. This can be as simple as reaching out to a local reporter and offering to give them a story about what the local CERT is doing;
* Keep the media updated with advisories;
* Provide the media with press releases about CERT participation in an event, exercise, or emergency response.
* Photograph CERT in action at events, exercises, and emergency responses;
* Submit any participation to [pio@dhs.in.gov](mailto:pio@dhs.in.gov) for inclusion in the Hoosier Responder and Indiana Department of Homeland Security social media.