

Tri Community CERT (Community Emergency Response Team)
for
Highland Heights, Mayfield Heights, Mayfield Village, Richmond Heights, Ohio

Statement of Operations

Edition 3, 7/20/22, Prepared by Paul Berne, Executive Director, and reviewed by the Executive Board.
First edition prepared April 10, 2012
Edit 1 March 25, 2013. Edit 2 April 4, 2014. Edit 3 July 20, 2022.
Edit 4 _____ Edit 5 _____ Edit 6 _____

I. Introduction

Highland Heights, Mayfield Heights, Mayfield Village, and Richmond Heights, Ohio are members of the Tri Community Community Emergency Response Team, which is an organization that operates under the FEMA umbrella and adheres to the standards, practices and protocol as established by the CERT national organization, state of Ohio, and Cuyahoga County, Ohio.

- That in the event of a major emergency or disaster within the communities, there is a likelihood that emergency management and public safety resources such as fire and rescue, emergency medical services, and law enforcement agencies may benefit from the availability of additional trained resources like the Tri Community CERT.
- That citizens within the Tri Community CERT communities may benefit from immediate response by CERT.
- That the Tri Community CERT program offers a resource in the form of residents trained by local emergency management, public safety professionals, and trained and certified volunteer instructors, who can provide an immediate and deliberate response that may have the capability to save lives, reduce the severity of injuries and preserve property.

A. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide standard operating practices for the Tri Community CERT.

B. Scope

This applies to Tri Community CERT operations and administration for emergency or non-emergency actions, from the date of promulgation until formal deactivation of the Tri Community CERT. Changes may be incorporated as required.

C. Authority

Tri Community CERT operates under the primary direction of the Fire and Police Chiefs in the member communities, or anyone to which they grant authority to direct the team.

D. Background

The Tri Community CERT program operates in accordance with CERT requirements as set forth by Federal, State and Local controlling entities. This document provides additional information pertaining to structure, policies and process descriptions as developed by the Chiefs and the Executive Board (“the Board”). The Board has primary responsibility for maintaining this document.

E. Applicability

This applies to Tri Community CERT (“the team”) operations, and is intended to apply to all members and actions of the team.

F. Mission Statement

The mission of the Tri Community CERT is to provide support and assistance to the Safety Forces in our communities in whatever form and manner they deem appropriate. We will also work to educate the public in areas of disaster preparedness and any other activity within the scope of the CERT process as described by the national, state or county governing entities. We will be ready to support our emergency personnel in doing the “greatest good for the greatest number of people” while upholding the CERT protocol.

II. Personnel

This section provides information relating to participation in and leadership of the Tri Community CERT. See Appendix i for the current Executive Board and Chiefs.

A. Requirements for Membership

Membership is open to residents aged 18 and older of our member communities, and to those living outside of those communities as deemed appropriate by the Board of Directors. There are no barriers to participation on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, ethnic group or race, functional need or religion. Volunteers will be subject to a criminal background check. Exclusion based on the outcome of the criminal background check is at the discretion of the Fire Department Chiefs in the member communities, who may also seek review by members of the command structure at the Police Departments. Members may not be a member of any terrorist or subversive organization. They must complete and return the following documents: (1) Hold Harmless Agreement (2) CERT application form (3) Acknowledgment of Completion of Criminal Background Check form (4) CERT Backpack and Supply Receipt Form(s) and must register with ServeOhio. Members are required to report to the Executive Director any action resulting in a felony charge against them, and must also submit to an MVR check if requested. Members use their personal vehicles from time to time for CERT functions and as such, must maintain insurance in accordance with the laws of Ohio, and must not engage in using their vehicle for any CERT function if subject to a driver’s license suspension or related action.

B. Executive Board

The Executive Director will be appointed by the Fire Department Chiefs. The Executive Board will be comprised of graduates of the CERT program and members of community Safety Forces. Recommendations for creating new Board positions and/or changing titles is at the discretion of the Executive Director, subject to approval by a majority of Board members. The Board will meet regularly and vote on all decisions specific to the operations of CERT according to standard rules of procedure.

The following titles can be assigned to Board members as deemed necessary:

Executive Director
Liaison Officer
Finance Officer
Safety Officer
Logistics Officer
Deputy Director
Public Information Officer (PIO)
Training Coordinator
Events Coordinator
Safety Forces Liaison
Member Relations Coordinator
Assistants to these areas will be so designated
Records Retention and Chief Information Officer

General Role Descriptions:

Executive Director

The Executive Director shall act as liaison between CERT and other related entities on local, county, state, and federal levels, serve as primary citizen liaison between CERT and city officials, police and fire safety forces, and service personnel, oversee all CERT activities, unless otherwise directed act as primary incident commander for CERT operations, distribute material relating to Board meetings, direct Board meetings. The Executive Director can designate another Board Member or Team Member to assume temporary responsibilities relating to these activities.

Liaison Officer

The Liaison Officer shall handle all administration relating to team operations, serve as an additional liaison between CERT and other related entities on local, county, state, and federal levels, handle record-keeping, attend meetings as CERT representative and provide other assistance to the CERT as deemed necessary.

Logistics Officer

The Logistics Officer shall handle supply management including coordination of acquisition and distribution, and maintenance of the central supply area, procurement of items for distribution to the community, supply chain management, and in coordination of general CERT activities.

Finance Officer

The Finance Officer shall maintain the team funds and financial records, coordinate purchase orders and reimbursements, and provide support to the team in related areas.

Safety Officer

The Safety Officer will coordinate activity to ensure that CERT actions are performed in accordance with sound safety standards. This position is subject to varying responsibility based on the risk management and safety skill and experience level of the designee.

Safety Forces Liaison

The Safety Forces Liaison will be a member of the Safety Forces in a member community, who will assume primary responsibility for handling various communication, coordination of activity, training and leadership activities, and will also assume a leadership role in assisting with and directing team activity in the event of an emergency deployment.

Deputy Director

The Deputy Executive Director shall assist the Executive Director as needed, and assume the primary leadership role in the organization as needed.

Public Information Officer (PIO)

The PIO will handle communication in accordance with ICS in the event of a disaster or emergency situation in which they are so designated to fulfill this responsibility. They will also handle communication management for the team including community outreach, recruitment, public relations and public event display. The CERT PIO will communicate with the city's PIO and obtain approval for communication as warranted.

Events Coordinator

Responsible for scheduling all aspects of community event participation, recruiting and assigning volunteer participants, and determining assets to be deployed for the events.

Training Coordinator

Develops training programs including the basic new member class. Schedules trainers, classes and directs the training team.

Records Retention and Chief Information Officer

Manages electronic document storage, record preservation, and related equipment.

III. General Operating Information

A. Injuries

While there may be an opportunity for medical expenses to be paid by a governmental entity, there is no assurance that expenses arising from any CERT activity will be paid by any governmental source. The CERT team has excess medical coverage subject to the terms and limitations of the policy. Members are encouraged to ensure they have private medical coverage or coverage from some other source that would apply to CERT activities. See Appendix iii for updated information regarding limited excess insurance coverage that may apply.

B. Liability

CERT members may have access to defense and indemnification by the member communities pending the nature of their involvement, type of event and authorization of that event and facts specific to the occurrence. The Tri Community CERT makes no assurances that defense and/or indemnification of members will take place. Each event will be evaluated separately in conjunction with referral to the Chiefs, Mayor and Law Director of the involved community. CERT members must register at ServeOhio and any other similar organization offering immunities to volunteers. Also, they must act within the scope of their CERT training while engaged in any CERT function. The following guidelines also apply:

- CERT Instructors have been trained by the State Emergency Management Agency Train-The-Trainer Course, or the same course offered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency at the Emergency Management Institute at Emmitsburg, Pennsylvania.
- CERT Instructors teach the CERT program according to the CERT Instructor and Participant Manuals promulgated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and there is no topical variance from these manuals unless approved by the Training Director and the Fire Chiefs. Instructors should ensure that each student has demonstrated competencies in all topics of discussion to the best of their abilities.
- CERT members will have completed the CERT Course and have received their training certificate.
- CERT members will be aware of the limits of operation as CERT members. This means that if they have received other specialized training and/or certification in such areas as First Responder, Emergency First Aid, CPR, AED, Chain Saw Operation, etc., they perform those functions outside of their CERT role.
- CERT members will activate and deploy only in accordance with CERT protocol. CERT members should not self-deploy; if there is an emergency situation and there hasn't been a deployment, members should ensure the safety and well-being of themselves and their family and neighbors, but this is not considered a CERT function unless there has been an actual deployment.

- CERT members must communicate all important issues, incidents, injuries, non-compliance with CERT protocol and any inappropriate actions, activity or behavior to their leadership during the course of operation, and proper documentation will be prepared in accordance with instructions and CERT protocol.

C. Identification

Tri Community CERT members will be readily identified by wearing some form of CERT clothing, helmet, and/or ID. The ID will be returned should group termination or self-termination from the CERT occur.

IV. Logistics

A. Individual Member Equipment

1. CERT backpacks are issued to CERT members during training sessions and are initially stocked with a flashlight, protective helmet, CERT vest, goggles, multi-purpose tool, glow stick and gloves. CERT members are encouraged to customize their own backpacks by adding equipment and tools specific to their individual preferences and abilities. They should only add items that are within the scope of their capacity and training to use. All items should have a direct basis for use in an emergency situation. The Tri Community CERT and its communities make no warranty, guarantee or assurance as to the workmanship, performance, safety or integrity of any of the supplies we provide.
2. CERT kits have been distributed to graduates, but remain the property of Tri Community CERT. They may be retained as long as the member is an active member of CERT. The backpack and CERT-issued equipment will be returned to CERT administration immediately should group termination or self-termination from CERT occur, unless otherwise determined.
3. Backpacks will be brought to all training events unless otherwise specified. Backpacks will be brought to all emergency response missions.
4. CERT Members are responsible for maintaining their own equipment, including city or village-issued supplies. Regular periodic inspection of equipment and provision of necessary maintenance is encouraged.
5. Any available additional or specialized equipment or materials needed by the team to accomplish its mission but not carried in the backpacks may be used within the scope of CERT training.

MEMBERS. OTHER THAN SAFETY FORCES, MAY NOT BRING OR CARRY FIREARMS OR WEAPONS TO ANY CERT FUNCTION, INCLUDING DEPLOYMENTS.

B. Equipment Storage

1. Equipment is stored primarily at the Mayfield Village Fire Department and in the CERT trailer garaged at the Highland Heights Fire Department.
2. This storage area is to be used for equipment specific to CERT training and deployment. Equipment will be maintained on a regular basis.
3. Access to the equipment will be determined by the Chiefs and Board.

V. Documentation

1. All training conducted for and by CERT will be documented.
2. All CERT emergency operations will be documented.
3. CERT designees will provide this documentation to the Chiefs and others they so designate as they are directed.

VI. Training

A. Basic

To be designated as a Member of the Tri Community CERT, residents from the member communities must first receive official CERT training in a 20-hour program of instruction which is taught in accordance with the guidelines established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. A copy of the Standard Operating Guidelines will be available on the CERT website, or a printed copy may be obtained upon request. Participants will complete the required forms as designated by the Executive Board. Anyone already a member of a CERT organization that seeks membership in Tri Community CERT should complete an application, hold harmless and authorization for a background check.

B. Skills Refresher

CERT members will receive refresher/additional related training as deemed appropriate.

C. Exercises

CERT will be invited to local CERT events and meetings as well as mock disaster exercises. CERT may also conduct its own version of these exercises to identify weaknesses and strategies for operations and refresh member skills and competencies.

Tri Community CERT Executive Board, Chiefs and Mayors as of July 20, 2022

Tri Community CERT Executive Board:

Paul Berne, Executive Director

Jen Schultz, Finance Officer

Safety Officer (shared responsibility)

Terri Stahl, Logistics Officer

Colette Gschwind, Assistant Logistics Officer

Chuck Berner, Acting Training Coordinator

Vic Rukavina, Events Coordinator

Dave Soriano, Safety Forces Liaison

Rick Whitehead, Member Relations Coordinator

Mike Okrent, Records Retention and Chief Information Officer

Pat Gregoric, Assistant Training Coordinator

Jerry Banks

Frank Skala

Jim Homa

William Turner, Chief, Highland Heights Fire Department

Dennis Matejcic, Chief, Highland Heights Police Department

Bruce Elliott, Chief, Mayfield Heights Fire Department (Chief Elliott is also the contact for Cuyahoga County EMA call-out.)

Tony Mele, Chief, Mayfield Heights Police Department

Gino Carcioppolo, Chief, Mayfield Village Fire Department

Paul Matias, Chief, Mayfield Village Police Department

Marc Neumann, Chief, Richmond Heights Fire Department

Tom Wetzal, Chief, Richmond Heights Police Department

Chuck Brunello, Mayor, Highland Heights

Brenda Bodnar, Mayor, Mayfield Village

Anthony DiCicco, Mayor, Mayfield Heights

Kim Thomas, Mayor, Richmond Heights

CERT Typical Response Special Order of Procedures

Generally, upon receipt of a voice, email or text call-out, follow these steps:

If the call-out is generated by Mayfield Village Police Dispatch, you should follow the instructions and deploy to the designated area. You should advise the individual designated as IC in the dispatch message that you are deploying. You should note the time you were contacted for post-response evaluation purposes.

If contacted by live voice call or text from an individual (not the automated dispatch):

1. Let the caller/texter know whether or not you are able to respond
2. If able to respond, write down where you are to go and be sure to understand the nature of the call-out
3. Ensure your personal safety and that of your family is adequate before deploying. Inform family or a designated contact that you are responding to a call-out.
4. Dress appropriately for weather and site conditions
5. Take your CERT backpack – make sure that it is up to date for what will be needed (Batteries in flashlight, cell phone on and charged, safety equipment, etc.).
6. Go to the site and follow guidance of personnel there regarding parking and where to assemble. If parking guidance is not provided, park in an area far enough away from the emergency situation to ensure your personal safety.
7. Report to the Incident Commander.
8. Sign-in and make sure the appropriate person has your contact information (cell phone number you have with you or radio number if provided).
9. Gather information on what the nature of the emergency is and what your role will be. Follow the direction of the IC, do not make command decisions on your own.
10. Maintain physical proximity with another individual who will be your “buddy” if there are adequate resources for the buddy system. Do not go anywhere alone unless so directed, and inform the IC or section chief accordingly. Maintain direct verbal communication with your buddy at all times. Report any concerns to direct supervisor immediately.
11. Once at your designated task site, communicate to your direct superior that you have arrived and that your radio or cell phone is operable there.
12. Communicate frequently with your direct supervisor to let them know what the conditions are on site and whether or not you will be able to complete your assignment.
13. If the situation changes, you feel in danger, or you are not able to complete what was assigned to you, communicate these changes immediately to your direct supervisor.
14. Once your assignment has been completed, communicate this to your direct supervisor and wait for instructions before leaving for next assignment.

Insurance

Tri Community CERT has purchased insurance through an outside company, CIMA Volunteer Insurance. Certain terms, conditions and restrictions apply, and the coverage is EXCESS over any other available coverage in accordance with the policy language.

The attached brochure describes the basic features of the policy, and the loss reporting requirements. It is essential that the claim submission process be followed in accordance with the insurance company's requirements.

MEMBERS SHOULD REVIEW THE RELATED INSURANCE MATERIAL ATTACHED TO THE TEAM WEBSITE; WWW.TRICOMMUNITYCERT.COM

THE ABOVE CAPTIONED INSURANCE MAY BE CANCELLED WITHOUT NOTICE TO THE TRI COMMUNITY CERT TEAM MEMBERS. FURTHER, THE TRI COMMUNITY CERT IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTIONS OF THE INSURANCE COMPANY, HAS NO CONTROL OVER THE ACTIONS OF THE INSURANCE COMPANY, AND AS EACH EVENT IS UNIQUE, MAKES NO ASSURANCES, PROMISES OR GUARANTEES THAT COVERAGE WILL BE PROVIDED TO MEMBERS BY THE INSURANCE COMPANY.

LOG OF EDITS TO MANUAL

Edit March 25, 2013

1. Replaced information relating to Chiefs Donnelly and Mohr, added Andy Attina, PIO.
2. Add to Member Equipment statement on firearms and weapons.
3. Add non-residents to Requirements for Membership.
4. Statement on record retention added to Documentation section.
5. Statement on confrontation and physical contact, and drivers license and insurance added to Operations, Utilization section.

Edit April 4, 2014

1. Added Chief Carcioppolo, retitled position of Tom Ference as PIO, added Pat Gregoric and Therese Marschall and the positions of Training Coordinator and Community Event/Recruiting Coordinator.
2. Added Appendix Page iii, Insurance, to the manual. Added references to this appendix to the Liability and Injuries sections of the manual.

Edit July 20, 2022

1. Added Richmond Heights.
2. Updated Chiefs.
3. Removed basic CERT operations sections that are covered in other CERT materials.
4. Updated Board positions.
5. Updated other basic information i.e., CERT trailer.
6. Removed self-deployment process as no longer recognized by CERT.

This Statement of Operations is not intended to be inclusive of all actions, activities or requirements of operations of or participation in Tri Community CERT. This may be amended by the Executive Board and/or Chiefs as they deem appropriate.