The Role of Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) in Disaster Management:

Some Case Examples of Campus CERTs

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Abstract: The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) is a program that is rapidly gaining in importance as the need for trained civilians, often the first responders to their own local disasters, becomes more vital in an effort to make disaster management as effective and safe as possible for survivors and rescuers alike. The purpose of this paper is to examine the role CERTs occupy in disaster management, with a special focus on Campus CERTs (C-CERTs) that function on university campuses. The research comes primarily from news articles, academic papers, and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reports. This paper is comprised of a brief overview of the CERT Program as well as some of the challenges and limitations with which the program can be faced. An exploration of the role CERTs take on in disaster management and response is discussed and further explained with a case study on C-CERTs. The conclusion of this paper is that CERTs are an effective method to ensure that community members are professionally trained in order to provide relief and assistance to disaster survivors without the compromise of their own safety.

CERT Training. Source: FEMA.gov

Introduction: CERT is the commonly known acronym for the Community Emergency Response Team, a FEMA program for civilian disaster volunteers. To bring CERT into perspective, a concise definition is provided on the arlingtonva.us website as "a group of people organized as a neighborhood-based team that receives special training to enhance their ability to recognize, respond to, and recover from a major emergency or disaster situation." However, this definition does little to convey the reality of its complexity when responding to a disaster. In the event of a disaster the growth of a singular, local CERT knows no bounds. Often times its growth is rapid, due to a constant stream of volunteers, and its chain of command shifts and multiplies, as federal and local organizations and agencies join relief efforts—all with a resolve to bring a disaster under control and provide relief and aid for survivors.

This paper is divided into four parts: (1) An overview of the CERT program; (2) How CERTs can be used in Disaster Management and Response; (3) A Case Study of Campus CERTs (C-CERTs); and (4) Conclusion.

1. An Overview of Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs)

History:

Without the emergence of Emergency Management (often referred to as "Disaster Management") as a policy initiative that needed to be researched, developed, and implemented nationally, there would have been no winding path that eventually led to the federal-level adoption and fleshing-out of the CERT program. If there had never been a realization at the federal level of the need to have a nation-wide response to disaster—there may never have been the newer notion of bottom-up, or local-to-national, focus on disaster management and response seen today. So, before one can delve into this topic of CERTs, the reader should understand the history of how Disaster Management changed from an abstract, rhetorical notion to its current state as a subject of eminent importance, and frequent changes, within the policy realm.

The Beginnings of Disaster Management:

In the early 1900s Disaster Management was left largely to non-profit and non-governmental organizations, such as the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army. The federal government had little to no dealings with disaster relief during this time. Congress would respond to disasters incident-by-incident and felt that the disaster relief role was better suited to non-profits, or other charity driven organizations ("History of Disaster Relief," n.d.).

The concept of comprehensive federal Disaster Management was not realized until 1979, when President Jimmy Carter signed an executive order and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was created ("Origins of U.S. Emergency Management," 2014). According to the

Anna Maria College Online Programing article "Origins of U.S. Emergency Management" (2014), the newly created FEMA accomplished the following:

FEMA Careers. Source: FEMA.gov

FEMA absorbed a host of disaster-related agencies, including the Federal Insurance Administration, the National Fire Prevention and Control Administration, the National Weather Service Community Preparedness Program, and the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration. It also assumed responsibility for civil defense.

The creation of FEMA was perhaps the first step towards the current system for disaster response within the United States. It allowed the country to move from its past state, often fragmented and without any clear structure, to a more centralized, universal system that has been continuously reevaluated and reorganized as the United States tries to learn from inadequate disaster response in an effort to be better prepared for future disasters.

The Evolution and History of the CERT Program:

Even with the Federal government taking a more proactive position when dealing with Disaster Management and aid, oftentimes disaster relief was still too slow in providing direct assistance to survivors and communities where a timely response was vital. With this in mind it stands to reason that the federal government would seize the chance to expand upon and enlarge a pilot program—as was seen with the adoption of the CERT program— that had much promise in better-arming communities for disaster.

The origins for the idea of the CERT program arose from the City of Los Angeles Fire Department that began the pilot program after two key events: the exposure of a different culture's handling of disaster preparedness and a large-scale event that had yielded disastrous results.

In 1985 a group comprised of Los Angeles City officials traveled to Japan to study the country's preparedness plan for earthquake disasters. What they found was a very extensive plan for disaster response that heavily emphasized the training of neighborhoods, into single-function teams, that were trained to alleviate potential disaster scenarios that could follow a large-scale earthquake. The CERT-LA's website states that these neighborhoods were singularly trained for "fire suppression, light search and rescue operations, first aid, or evacuation" ("CERT Los Angeles," n.d.).

Later, in September of that same year, a Los Angeles City investigation team was sent to a large-scale earthquake, registering an 8.1 on the Richter scale, which devastated Mexico City.

The earthquake killed upwards of 10,000 people and more than 30,000 were injured. Following the earthquake large groups of local volunteers organized themselves and conducted light search and rescue within their communities. These volunteers achieved more than 800 successful rescues, but at the same time more than 100 volunteers died during the 15-day span of rescue operations ("CERT Los Angeles," n.d.). The death of these volunteers was largely due to a lack of civilian training in face of natural disasters that many cities, nationally and internationally, were now beginning to realize was an issue that needed to be addressed.

From the evidence provided by the disastrous results of Mexico City it became evident that some level of civilian training was necessary to provide for safety, especially for the volunteers themselves when responding to disasters as well as for the survivors they are trying to assist. The City of Los Angeles Fire Department set out to achieve this goal.

In 1986 The City of Los Angeles developed a pilot program to train volunteers with the ability to perform basic fire suppression, light search and rescue, and first aid. The first team to complete the training was made up of 30 people and, with various demonstrations and drills, proved the initiative to be a practical option to meet the need for trained civilian responders within communities. Due to a lack of city resources, however, there was not much of a chance for the program to be expanded, until a particular event occurred in 1987 ("Vermont Emergency Management," n.d.).

On October 1, 1987 the Whittier Narrows Earthquake brought to reality the threat of large-scale natural disasters and demonstrated the need to accelerate the training of civilians in the face of potential disasters and emergencies ("Vermont Emergency Management," n.d.). The earthquake was a 5.9-magnitude event and it occurred on the Whittier fault that runs from Chino Hills to Whittier and is part of the Puente Hills Fault, which expands from just west of downtown Los Angeles to Puente Hills (Sprague, 2012). The earthquake devastated many areas within the Los Angeles Basin and Whittier area and brought home the realization for many residents that they needed to be prepared if such a disaster were to occur again.
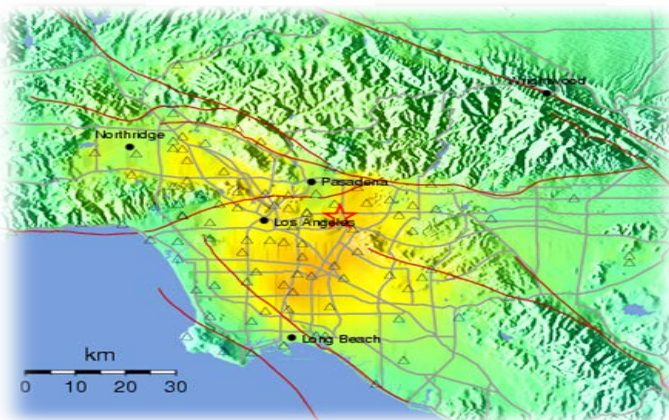
CISN Shakemap for Whittier Narrows Earthquake. Source: earthquake.usgs.gov

The 5.9M quake caused the most severe damage in the Uptown area of Whittier, but also in the cities of Pasadena, Alhambra, and San Gabriel. The earthquake "killed 8 people, injured several hundred, damaged over 10,000 buildings, and caused in excess of $350 million in property losses" all throughout the area it affected ("20th Century History," 2007).

The City of Los Angeles responded by creating the Disaster Preparedness Division within the Los Angeles City Fire Department. The objectives of this group included the following:

- Educate and train the public and government sectors in disaster preparedness,
- Evaluate and disseminate disaster information,
- Develop, train, and maintain a network of Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) ("Vermont Emergency Management," n.d.).

With the success of the pilot program, in 1993 FEMA decided to adopt the program and make it accessible to communities nationwide. FEMA's Emergency Management Institute cooperated with the Los Angeles Fire Department in an effort to develop the CERT program and training materials so that they could be applied to all types of possible hazards, natural or man-made ("CERT Los Angeles," n.d.).

Then in January of 2002, President Bush gave his State of the Union Address and called on everyone within the United States to volunteer 4000 hours throughout the course of an individual's life ("Vermont Emergency Management," n.d.). The President launched a program called Citizen Corps in order to capture the spirit that had emerged following the events that occurred on September 11, 2001 ("About Citizen Corps," 2014). CERT, among other programs, became a part of Citizen Corps, which served as a foundation to link numerous volunteer activities to expand the resources of communities when responding to different emergencies as well as undertaking crime prevention ("Vermont Emergency Management," n.d.). In essence, according to Ready.gov's (2014) article "About Citizen Corps", the Citizen Corps was created in order to achieve the following:

> Citizen Corps was created to help coordinate volunteer activities that will make our communities safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to any emergency situation. It provides opportunities for people to participate in a range of measures to make their families, their homes, and their communities safer from the threats of crime, terrorism, and disasters of all kinds.

Citizen Corps' Logo. Source: Ready.gov

As of November 2011, the CERT program, had implemented training in 50 states, three territories and six foreign Countries ("CERT Los Angeles," n.d.). As countries globally try to enhance their disaster management plans, many of them look to CERT training as a possible basis for their own local-level emergency response.

CERT Organization:

When a disaster occurs, natural or man-made, an immediate response is needed. In order to avoid chaos and maintain communication when providing an effective disaster response, CERTs use the Incident Command System (ICS) to organize their relief efforts and to establish an effective span of control.

The ICS is a "management system designed to enable effective and efficient domestic incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure ("Incident Command System Resources," 2015)". Professional responders utilize the ICS because it provides a universal structure that can expand or contract depending on the needs of a particular crisis or disaster. It also provides a universal language that anyone can understand, so that responders, whether professional or volunteer, can cooperate together without vital communication being lost or misunderstood in the miasma of jargon that is often utilized by a wide variety of first responders. The ICS is normally structured into five functional areas including: Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration ("Incident Command System Resources," 2015).

When applied to CERTs, the ICS operates in the usual framework, with the command function being filled by the first CERT Team Leader to respond to the disaster scene. The ICS functions within CERTs by organizing volunteers/personnel into specialized functional groups based on acquired skills, or ones that were already present. ICS functions in the following ways:

- **Management, or Command,** (the CERT Team Leader) is responsible for deciding what is to be done.
- **Operations** is responsible for how it gets done.
- **Logistics** is responsible for how it gets supported.
- **Planning** is responsible for determining what is going on and how the information gets communicated and/or displayed.
- **Finance/Administration** is responsible for how everything gets documented ("CERT Resources," n.d.).
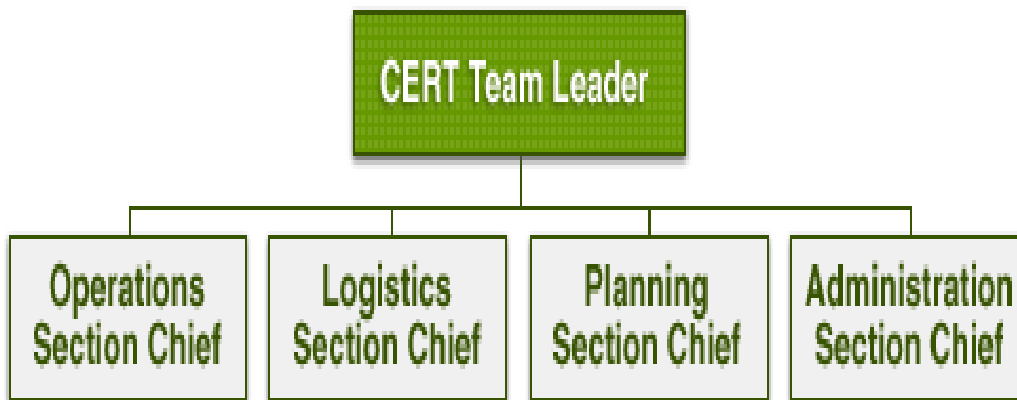
CERT/ICS Command function. Source: Fema.gov

The ICS can also, as it is utilized by professional personnel, expand and contract based on the needs of the disaster situation. As a disaster situation grows graver, and personnel from a state or federal level begin to arrive, the simpler ICS structure that fit the needs of just the CERT team can grow to meet the needs of the expanding disaster relief efforts.
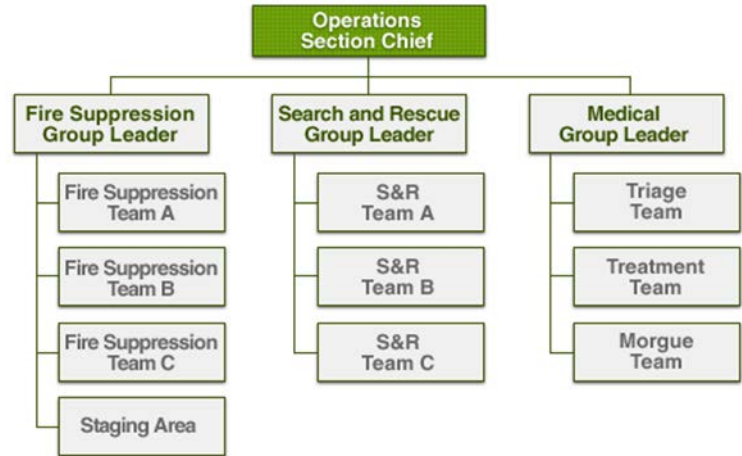
Expanded CERT/ICS organization. Source: FEMA.gov

How Volunteers are Trained:

CERT Training. Source: miamidade.gov

CERT members are local volunteers who are trained in disaster preparedness and response for events/issues their local community faces. FEMA has outlined universal training guidelines for the CERT program, but how communities deliver that program, and how they mobilize and utilize their volunteers, is up to the discretion of CERT team leaders and local authorities/ professional responders. The CERT course is delivered in the community by someone who is qualified, usually first responders, and the instructor has completed a CERT Train-the-Trainer (TTT) course. The Train-the-Trainer course is usually conducted by the State Training Office of Emergency Management or the Emergency Management Institute ("About Community Emergency Response Team," n.d.).

The CERT training for community volunteers may be given using a variety of schedules, for example, given over successive weekends. The training covers the following categories covered in nine separate units:

- Unit 1: Disaster Preparedness
  - Definition of a disaster and who responds
  - Disaster impact on infrastructure
  - Structural and nonstructural hazards
  - Disaster mitigation

- o Home, workplace, and community preparedness
- o Protection for disaster workers
- Unit 2: Disaster Fire Suppression
  - o Fire chemistry, hazards, and safety
  - o Portable fire extinguishers
  - o Fire suppression safety
  - o Hazardous materials
- Unit 3&4: Disaster Medical Operations Part (I&II)
  - o How to recognize and treat an airway obstruction, bleeding, and shock
  - o Principles of triage and how to conduct triage
  - o Public health considerations
  - o Functions of disaster medical operations
  - o Disaster medical treatment areas
  - o Patient evaluation and basic treatment

CERT Training. Source: FEMA.gov

- Unit 5: Light Search and Rescue Operations
  - o Search and rescue size up
  - o Conduction Search and rescue operations
- Unit 6: CERT Organization
  - o CERT and team organization
  - o Rescuer safety
  - o Documentation
- Unit 7: Disaster Psychology
  - o Physiological impact of a disaster and how to care for yourself, victims, and fellow CERT team members
- Unit 8: Terrorism and CERT
  - o Definition of terrorism
  - o Terrorist weapons
  - o CERTs and terrorist incidents
- Unit 9: Exercise and evaluation ("CERT Training Classes Description," n.d.)

2. How CERTs can be used in Disaster Management and Response

CERTs take on many active roles within a community. They seek to alleviate suffering not only during a disaster, but also before and after as well. That is, through training, CERT members are

prepared to serve their community not only in disaster response, but in disaster preparedness, mitigation, and recovery as well. This section of the paper will attempt to illustrate the importance of CERTs within a community before, during, and after a disaster

Before a Disaster: Instead of simply alleviating conditions and providing assistance post disasters, CERTs can provide a means of preparing their communities for disasters. By learning preventive measures, a community can ensure that their families are safe as well as work to minimize potential damage. CERTs can be utilized before a disaster occurs in a variety of ways, for example:

Resolve to Serve: Community Emergency Response Teams.
Source: FEMA.gov

- Distribute preparedness materials and conduct preparedness demonstrations.
- Ensure that community members have up-to-date knowledge and information of local first responders.
- Demonstrate how to properly install smoke detectors and other household monitoring devices.
- Verify and update a list of special needs residents who may have already registered with local emergency responders. Make sure these residents are properly prepared for disasters and that they will be accounted for in the face of a disaster.
- Distributing information, and teaching people how to about disaster kits.
- Teaching hazard mitigation procedures (e.g. eliminating hazardous material from home, ensuring electrical outlets are not overloaded, etc.).

During a Disaster: When a disaster is occurring widespread damage can take place and create more needs than can be immediately met by professional emergency responders. At times, these emergency responders may be delayed due to infrastructure damage or other causes. When such situations occur, CERTs can assist their local communities until professional responders are able to arrive. CERTs can contribute to disaster response in a number of ways, such as:

- Conducting light search and rescue operations.
- Documenting damage and relaying important information to emergency personnel.

- Conducting triage on disaster survivors before emergency responders arrive.
- Providing basic first aid to disaster survivors.
- Assisting with crowd control and providing updated information to residents.
- Helping lost individuals and those with special needs.

After a Disaster: As soon as the critical phase of a disaster has passed the process of regaining control and normalizing the affected area can begin. During this recovery process CERTs might fill the following roles:

- Helping survivors, first responders, and other CERT members cope with trauma induced from the disaster.
- Keeping up-to-date information for citizens on recovery efforts.
- Delivering food and other supplies to survivors and emergency responders.
- Directing traffic and helping to maintain security around affected or high damage areas.
- Helping to staff and set up shelters and medical centers.

An Example of Preparedness: Oregon CERT Activated to Prepare for Tsunami

On March 11, 2011 a magnitude 8.9 earthquake and massive tsunami struck eastern Japan, and residents of the coastal Oregon town of Astoria were concerned that a tsunami wave could potentially strike their area as well. The Astoria CERT was activated at 5:30 AM to stage a relocation center for anyone who responded to the warnings for people in low-lying areas of the possible inundation zone to move to higher ground (Davidson, n.d.).

The Astoria CERT's preparedness activities included:

- Set up a tsunami shelter at a local elementary school
- Prepared food for first responders and citizens who came to the shelter
- Had a "CERTmobile" that was a former ambulance that had a food-preparation space as well as emergency equipment
- Kept in contact with amateur radio operators observing conditions along the cost (Davidson, n.d.).

3. Case Study: Campus Community Emergency Response Teams(C-CERTs)

As communities strive to be more resilient in the face of disasters, both natural and man-made, it stands to reason that a program would develop that was specifically tailored (or even designed) with college campuses in mind. College campuses are sometimes as large as a town, and oftentimes a college or university may be a leading center of economic power and influence within a city or community. The university may have a large population—of students, faculty, and staff—that can be utilized and mobilized for a potential disaster. The Campus Community Emergency Response Team, or C-CERT, serves this function and provides a way to organize and deploy this diverse population in the event of a disaster. As a newer program, the number of C-CERTs has grown significantly and "it's estimated that more than 500 campuses run CERT programs" (Katims, 2013). This case study will strive to provide a concise depiction of

C-CERTs and the role they provide their community in the context of disaster preparedness and resilience.

CERT training. Source: University of South Florida-Global Health Department

Background:

When an emergency situation occurs, whether it is a natural disaster or human caused event, a college campus is a community of its own—and students, faculty, and staff want to be prepared. Sometimes professional responders cannot provide an immediate response to an emergency situation on the campus, so C-CERTs, just the same as normal CERTs, provide campuses with a way to be self-sufficient.

The first C-CERT was a train-the-trainer pilot program, developed in 2007, when the United States Department of Homeland Security gave a grant to the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan. The National CERT Program Office directed a company called PerformTech Inc. to evaluate the Michigan State University program and the information gathered was used to create a C-CERT Train-the-Trainer course and with it an annex to the CERT Basic Training guide for C-CERTs (*CERT Basic Training*, 2012, p. 1).

The C-CERT program is part of FEMA's ongoing process to revamp community preparedness using the "Whole Community" approach. Under this approach, FEMA seeks to show "that the country isn't completely resilient unless each community member is engaged and educated about what to do in a disaster situation" (Katims, 2013). The "Whole Community" approach is structured around the following principles:

- Understand and meet the actual needs of the whole community.
- Engage and empower all parts of the community.
- Strengthen what works well in communities on a daily basis ("Whole Community," 2015).

How C-CERTs Are Started

There are a multitude of avenues that can be pursued by students, faculty, and staff alike in the effort of forming a C-CERT on a college campus. The more common starting points for C-CERTs, however, are either for the program to be implemented as part of a funding package or for

students, faculty, and staff to approach the college's administration for approval to organize and start the program.

Colleges receive much of their funding through government grants or from the private sector (i.e. businesses, alumni, etc.). At times these funds can be used at the college's discretion, but at other times the funding is provided with a specific purpose, or varying directives, that must be met, or accomplished. There are grants given to institutions of higher education to improve their emergency management plans and response efforts. C-CERTs are sometimes created and maintained by grants of this nature, for they provide a comprehensive way for colleges and universities to organize and execute directions given with a grant. Further explanation of the funding of C-CERTs will be discussed later in the paper.

C-CERTs can also be developed as a result of effort of students, faculty, and staff who take the initiative to begin the program. Though it is never an easy task to start a new program, especially one such as the C-CERT program that has funding and liability issues, perseverance can be key, and getting approval of a college's administration is not an impossible feat. This is especially true if the orchestrators of the program are passionate in their efforts to create such a program. An example of a student driven effort to establish such a program is seen with Miami University's Canes Emergency Response Team.

An Example of a Beginning: Miami University's Canes Emergency Response Team

In August of 2005, Hurricane Katrina plowed into Florida's southeastern coast. The Hurricane came ashore between Miami and Fort Lauderdale, and the area experienced winds that reached up to ninety-two miles-per-hour (Copeland, 2005). Miami University, located in Miami, Florida, was one of the areas affected by the hurricane when the Category Two storm passed through the University causing light damage, which included downed trees and power lines ("'Canes Emergency Response Team," n.d.).

In the days following the hurricane, it became evident to faculty, staff, and students alike that the University did not have a sufficient response plan or team in the event of a more serious disaster situation. One student set out with a vision to provide an adequate response.

Daniel Carvajal was the student who took on the task and he began to shape his vision into creating a student run emergency response team based on the national CERT Program. He approached the members of his fraternity, Sigma Phi Epsilon, and received support from two others, Brian Bellows and Tarik Mandi, in beginning the movement to create and fund the student organization ("'Canes Emergency Response Team," n.d.).

After a lot of effort, and with assistance from the Miami-Dade County Office of Emergency Management and the University's Butler Center for Volunteer Service and Leadership Development, the first class of the Canes Emergency Response Team graduated in 2006 (Altizer, Kraft, & Stanley, 2012).

The team has grown since its first graduating class and now consists of over fifty student members, co-advised by the University of Michigan's Office of Emergency Management (Altizer, Kraft, & Stanley, 2012). The Canes Emergency Response Team has become a vital part of the university's response plan and is able to cover and manage the entire campus if necessary. Furthermore, if requested and approved by the university, the student-led team has the capacity and abilities required to respond to disasters that occur beyond the boundaries of the university ("'Canes Emergency Response Team," n.d.).

How C-CERTs Are Run

College campuses are complex communities and have differing vulnerabilities, or potential disasters, that could affect them based on their geographic locale and the environment of the surrounding area. Due to the varying difficulties and needs of campuses across the nation, it is reasonable to state that a single, one model-fits-all approach to C-CERTs would not be appropriate to the dynamic of properly preparing college campuses for disasters. The official annex to the basic CERT training guide for C-CERTs provides for the necessary flexibility by allowing schools to add training requirements or make adjustments as needed (Katims, 2013).

CERT training. Source: FEMA.gov

Training for C-CERTs can come from a variety of sources and the way the training is delivered can be tailored to the specific needs of the college. College campuses often have a variety of professionals and experts who can be called upon to teach sections of CERT basic training. However, whoever is providing the training is expected to have completed the CERT Train-the-Trainer program. Furthermore, some colleges have partnerships, or strong ties, with local responders—such as local community police, fire, and emergency medical service providers—or local CERTs, that would benefit from coordination with a college.

This also creates familiarity between members of the C-CERT and local first responders. Logically, the training courses, drills, and simulations should be offered to potential C-CERT members based on the needs of the institution. If a college's CERT training is being offered for college credit, or even if it isn't, the CERT Basic Training Course might be taught over a full semester instead of a few days of intensive training, and then supplemented with CPR, defibrillator training, and theoretical material, depending on the liability and accreditation requirements of the college (*CERT Basic Training*, 2012, p. 4).

<u>An Example of Coordination: Auburn University's C-CERT</u>

Auburn University (AU) is located in Auburn, Alabama and has a C-CERT that is comprised only of faculty and staff volunteers, and reportedly has very strong coordination with local emergency responders and the Lee County Emergency Management's CERT. The benefits of their coordination include:

- The local fire department helps run campus trainings
- Team members participate in refresher courses and periodic meetings to keep up their skills
- A CERT employee can be cross trained and be a member of both the C-CERT and Lee County's CERT if they live within the county and complete the AU training course (Katims, 2013).

How C-CERTs Are Funded

As a college program, one common aspect of C-CERTs is that they often receive funding, to varying degrees, from their home institutions. This funding might come from a variety of sources, though it is often obtained through a government grant that has been awarded to a college or university, usually with conditional requirements that must be met. An example of a government grant that is awarded to colleges, and that has assisted in the promotion and creation of C-CERTs, is the Emergency Management for Higher Education (EMHE) Grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The EMHE grant program supports projects at institutions of higher education to develop or improve campus-based all-hazard emergency planning efforts. These projects must follow the framework of the four phases of emergency management—Prevention/Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery ("Emergency Management," n.d.). Many higher education institutions have received this or similar grants, and each college or university may have its own particular method of implementing the projects under the grant. C-CERTs are simply one such project. An example to illustrate this use of funding is seen in the way in which Georgetown University organized and created a functioning C-CERT at its campus in Washington, D.C. Georgetown University was awarded the EMHE Grant from the U.S. Department of Education in 2009. One specific directive of the grant was to provide C-CERT training to at least 100 Georgetown students, faculty, and staff, which Georgetown then preceded to do. ("CERT," n.d.).

Though C-CERTs can originate with funding from a government source such as a grant, they may encounter difficulties when trying to obtain additional funding to maintain the C-CERT on an ongoing basis. A C-CERT might well expand beyond its initial membership level, and with that expansion will come the need to provide the new members with necessary training and equipment. Frequently, government funding for such growth and maintenance is slow in coming, if available at all, in which case C-CERTs will need to find alternative means of funding. Some C-CERT programs have become recognized students organizations, where they become qualified for student funds, or they become separate, but affiliated 501(c)3 nonprofit

organizations (Altizer, Kraft, & Stanley, 2012). Some C-CERTs have been innovative in seeking out other avenues of funding, which can include:

- Seeking state funding instead of federal.
- Obtaining private sector funding in the form of grants from foundations, corporate sponsors, or donations from college alumni.
- Utilizing free service from local first responders (Katims, 2013).

Challenges C-CERTs Face

Similar to any other program, there are challenges that C-CERTs face and some, more than others, are not easily overcome. These challenges are somewhat reflective of the challenges and limitations the larger, nation-wide CERT program faces, but some of them are specific to the C-CERT program specifically because of their partnership with, or fostering from, universities and colleges. Following are common challenges a C-CERT may face.

CERT training. Source: FEMA.gov

Funding: As stated above, funding can present a substantial challenge for C-CERTs. Often a team will have difficulty procuring the necessary funds to properly outfit all of its members, particularly if a C-CERT were to experience a phase of significant growth and participation. Funding can also become an issue if the program was previously being funded by a governmental aid, such as grant, and then those funds begin to run low. Finding, and securing, other funds can be difficult for C-CERTs.

Liability: Every campus will have different rules and regulations for liability concerning members of a C-CERT. Different factors will also come into play depending on who participates in a C-CERT, for example, if it is a team composed solely of students, of staff, or a combination of the two. University and college administrations will also have to take into consideration whether the C-CERT will participate on campus only, or respond throughout the surrounding community as well. To ensure that all possible scenarios are considered, and that the university or college will not be held responsible for any accidents or possible injuries, "the campus CERT leadership needs to work with campus legal and risk management departments to develop a sound, hold harmless liability form for CERT participants that must be maintained and available during both drills and emergency events" (Altizer, Kraft, & Stanley, 2012).

Training: Though college campuses may have a host of knowledge resources to draw upon, ranging from expert staff to local first responders, C-CERTs can still face some challenges when

it comes to training new members or providing opportunities for refresher courses for ongoing members. In the case of college campuses it is often difficult to find enough volunteers to provide refresher courses or training exercises. To combat this, C-CERTs often will look to their local first responders and join forces for routine training on both ends. To elaborate, first responders may provide extra personnel to conduct C-CERT training while members of the C-CERT may act as volunteers when emergency management organizations conduct large-scale training exercises for their departments. C-CERTs will also recruit student volunteers from their campuses to gain enough people to conduct a large-scale training exercise for C-CERT members. Another challenge in regards to training can be seen when trying to find a location and time, whereby all members can participate, especially given the busy schedule and varied activities of the staff, faculty, and students that compromise the C-CERTs.

Maintaining Participation: When it comes to recent graduates of a program, enthusiasm to participate and serve is high. However, sustaining this high level of energy and participation can prove to be a trying task for C-CERT organizers and trainers. It is often a challenge to schedule and maintain participation in training and team-building exercises that are needed to build rapport between C-CERT members and local first responders. This challenge can be addressed by maintaining constant outreach with members and planning training far in advance.

Role C-CERT Members Fill in Disaster Response

Similar to the original CERT program, C-CERT members are trained to assess and respond to emergency situations before professional responders can arrive. With college campuses in particular, many students feel a strong sense of wanting to protect their institution and fellow students in the face of a disaster. Such students are willing to prepare for and respond to emergencies within their campus community. Universities and colleges throughout the United States have addressed this in a variety of ways. This section discusses some of the ways in which C-CERTs function within their campus communities.

An Example of Possible Responses: Auburn University (AU) C-CERT

Comparable to many C-CERTs, the team that is formed by Auburn University, in Auburn, Alabama, has been trained in specific functions and tasks in order to be able to respond to disasters. For many Universities and colleges these responses will vary depending on the liability rules and regulation of individual institutions. The Auburn University's C-CERT is trained to do the following:

- Evacuate people
- Manage traffic
- Disseminate information to persons in the vicinity
- Set incident scene boundaries for the public
- Keep informed of the situation until professional first responders arrive (Katims, 2013).

An Example of Post-Disaster Recovery: Wesleyan University's C-CERT

In February of 2013, Winter Storm Nemo paralyzed widespread areas of the northeastern United States with heavy snowfall and high winds. The region affected by the storm experienced up to three feet of snow, causing at least fifteen deaths in the United States and Canada, and forcing scores of people from their homes and into emergency shelters due to a lack of heating and electricity (Klepper & Salsburg, 2013). Connecticut was one of the states that experienced some of the more severe weather conditions. The governor ordered all roads closed, emergency responders became trapped on roads, and reported power failures affected 38,000 homes and businesses ("The Latest: Nemo's Impact," 2013).Wesleyan University, located in Middletown, Connecticut, was in one such area that was heavily affected by the storm.

Following Winter Storm Nemo, Wesleyan's C-CERT helped other campus staff to clear snow from the main campus. The C-CERT activated three times in response to the winter storm and assisted in the following:

- Inspection and clearing of all emergency exits near academic and administrative buildings
- Shoveling heating vents to clear away snow
- Directing faculty and staff to open parking spaces
- Assisting campus visitors in finding parking
- Delivering supplies (such as shovels) to students living in campus housing (Drake, 2013).

An Example of Successful Training: Georgetown University's C-CERT

After first receiving funding through an Emergency Management for Higher Education Grant in 2009, Georgetown University's C-CERT program has rapidly become an influential program within the Washington DC metropolitan area. It has provided training and direction for other universities by serving as a basic template that other campuses can adopt and modify for their individual campuses. The Georgetown University's C-CERT program was even recognized by FEMA in the summer national CERT newsletter. The national CERT office called the program a "rousing success" and remarked that the program has "helped make Georgetown University and its neighbors stronger and more resilient communities" ("CERT," n.d.).

An example of Georgetown University's C-CERT training is seen when the university hosted the regional "CERT CON" in June of 2012. At this event over 100 volunteers from the Washington Metropolitan Area participated in the conference and field training exercise organized by the university and Montgomery County, Maryland. The conference was designed to offer participants the opportunity to practice their education and training in the field of disaster response in a simulated disaster environment with members of CERT teams from across the National Capitol Region (NCR) ("CERT," n.d.).
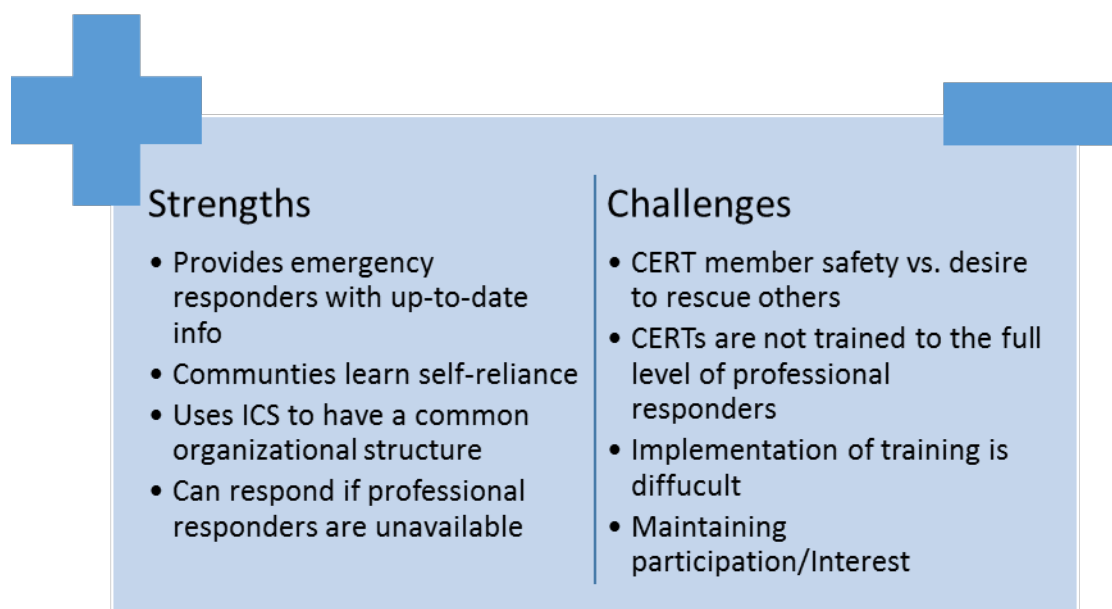
An Example of Supplementary Training: Kenai Peninsula College Resident Assistants

Kenai Peninsula College (KPC) is a community campus system within the University of Alaska Anchorage, a public university in Anchorage, Alaska, where more than 2,800 students attend each semester. KPC has four campus locations—Soldotna, Homer, Seward, and Anchorage ("About · Kenai Peninsula College," n.d.).

At Kenai Peninsula College, Resident Assistants (RAs) are given many different types of training—probably more than are required at other universities. They are put through their paces in an effort to make sure they are able to respond to any type of situation—including disasters. For many students on campus an RA will be their first responder during any type of emergency, so RA training includes C-CERT training. Though they do not have a traditional C-CERT at Kenai Peninsula College, the training provided to the RAs aims to prepare them to have the necessary skills to respond during an emergency situation. Therefore, in an effort to make sure the RAs are primed for anything, the University of Alaska Police Department has sent emergency staff to the campus to certify the RAs, desk aides and maintenance staff in C-CERT (Sullivan, 2014).

4. Conclusion

When utilized effectively CERTs can empower a community to prepare for, and respond, to disaster situations. CERTs have provided a means for citizens to take responsibility for their own safety by providing them with basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and basic first aid. CERT training also serves in educating a community about measures to reduce the impact of a disaster situation through teaching mitigation practices. The following chart presents the strengths and limitations of utilizing CERTs in disaster response and management.

Strengths
- Provides emergency responders with up-to-date info
- Communties learn self-reliance
- Uses ICS to have a common organizational structure
- Can respond if professional responders are unavailable

Challenges
- CERT member safety vs. desire to rescue others
- CERTs are not trained to the full level of professional responders
- Implementation of training is diffucult
- Maintaining participation/Interest

Despite its challenges and limitations, CERTs have benefited their communities and the Campus CERT, or C-CERT, can be especially beneficial for its own campus and surrounding community. With the coordination of a college or university's administration and the support if local first responders, members of C-CERTs can be of very real assistance addressing emergency situations that may arise.

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