

Amateur Radio and Community Emergency Response Teams

The more I investigate the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) concept the more I see a need for amateur radio to be involved. Let us take a look at how important it is for hams to take a part in CERT to make our family, neighborhood and the community safer during times of an incident to the area. You might not be interested in the Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES), but might see a need to be involved in CERT.

CERT training is designed to prepare you to help yourself, your family and your community in the event of a disaster. When there is mass chaos in an incident (event) and emergency services might not be able to get to you for hours maybe days, this is where you could make a difference. The training covers basic skills that are important to know when a disaster strikes and trained emergency personnel are overwhelmed or not available. With training and practice and by working as a team, we will be able to do the greatest good for the greatest number after a disaster, while protecting ourselves from becoming a victim.

The damage caused by natural disasters and manmade events such as earthquakes, hurricanes, tornados, flooding and terrorism can affect all elements of society and government. These events severely restrict or overwhelm our response resources, COMMUNICATIONS, transportation and utilities. Individuals and neighborhoods are often cut off from outside support and emergency personnel.

Community based preparedness planning allows us to prepare for and respond to anticipated disruptions and potential hazards following a disaster. As individuals and hams we can prepare our homes and families to cope during that critical period. Through pre-event planning, neighborhoods and community groups can work together to help reduce injuries. Loss of life and property damage community preparedness will enhance the ability of individuals and community groups to reduce their emergency needs and manage their existing resources until professional assistance becomes available.

Studies of behavior following disasters have shown that groups working together in the disaster period perform more effectively if there has been prior planning for disaster response. These studies have shown that organized grassroots efforts may be more successful if they are woven into the social and political fabric of the community, our neighborhoods, community groups AMATEUR RADIO groups and clubs, schools, workplace, places of worship and other existing organizations.

Effective response therefore requires comprehensive planning and coordination of all who will be involved. This includes AMATEUR RADIO, government, volunteer groups, private business, schools, and community organizations. With training and information, AMATEUR RADIO, individuals and community groups can be prepared to serve as a crucial resource capable of performing many of the emergency functions needed in the immediate post-disaster period. The CERT program is designed to help communities prepare for effective disaster response through training planning.

The training involved will probably take you between 20 and 30 hours and you will learn the basics in; disaster preparedness, fire safety, disaster medical operations, light search and rescue, CERT organization, disaster psychology and terrorism and CERT. With AMATEUR RADIO we can be the missing link during a disaster by communicating with the EOC and/or local dispatch center with information on injuries or lack of, deaths or lack of, fires or lack of, property damage assessment and any other information that may be needed to make the neighborhood safe. AMATEUR RADIO could be the only means of contact to the outside world during an event so we need to make use of our resources and our hobby. Think about it and when the CERT program comes to your area make sure to become part of it. Your family and community need your help.

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John D. Meyers, NB4K
Kentucky Section Manager
Great Lakes Division