

SBCounty CERT Newsletter



San Bernardino County Fire,
Office of Emergency Services



Disaster Volunteer Program of the Year Award

The San Bernardino County Operational Area Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program is the proud recipient of the 2015 Governor’s Volunteering and Service Award for the Disaster Volunteer Program of the Year. This award recognizes the work of all City/Town, unincorporated, tribal, campus and teen CERT programs in the County. Mike Antonucci and Michael A. Ramirez attended the award ceremony conducted on the West Steps of the State Capitol on October 15, 2015. Accepting the award on behalf of the Countywide CERT programs, Ramirez shared with attendees the outstanding accomplishments of the individual CERTs as well as the exceptional collaboration among teams during training, exercises and activations.

San Bernardino County has a population of just

over 2 million and is the largest county in the nation by area at 20,160 square miles. From suburban neighborhoods in the populous valley, to the mountain homes surrounded by national forests to the rural communities of the high desert, San Bernardino County is home to a truly diverse population. As a result of this diversity, it becomes challenging to provide disaster preparedness training, meaningful ongoing training, and relevant disaster response that addresses the particular needs of the various communities. San Bernardino County CERTs have addressed this challenge and strengthened Countywide preparedness by coordinating a comprehensive program in which residents of unincorporated, City/Town and tribal communities receive CERT training, are provided the opportunity to participate in HSEEP compliant exercises, and attend subsequent training throughout the year.



Michael Antonucci, Karen Baker, Deno Nguyen and Michael A. Ramirez on the steps of the State Capitol.

CERT volunteers then utilize this training in significant contributions of service during actual disasters.

The San Bernardino County Operational Area CERT Program is a multi-faceted partnership of unincorporated, municipal and tribal CERT programs. The central guiding organization for

CERT in Action!

As firefighters worked tirelessly to fight the raging Lake and North Fires, CERT Members from San Bernardino County CERT programs were behind the scenes to support those firefighters and others affected by the blazes.



CERT Team Leader, Dave Jones attends the Lake Fire morning briefing

This summer was the first time teams from the unincorporated communities of Angelus Oaks, Big Bear Valley, Forest Falls, Mill Creek Canyon, Mountain, Phelan/Pinon Hills, Morongo Basin and Emergency Operations Center (EOC) CERT Members were activated for incidents of this size. During the Lake Fire, which began June 6th, CERT Members from Morongo Basin CERT

Volunteer Award

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the programs is the San Bernardino County CERT Advisory Committee (SBCCAC). The committee, led by the San Bernardino County Fire, Office of Emergency Services (OES), is made up of representative CERT programs from around the County. The SBCCAC “exists to provide leadership and guidance to CERTs Countywide through the sharing of best practices, resources and information.”

Thousands of San Bernardino County residents have been trained in CERT, empowering individuals to care for themselves, their neighbors and their communities in the event of a major disaster.



Disaster Volunteer Program Award

Based upon a recently conducted survey, San Bernardino County CERT programs boast almost 1,500 affiliated volunteers. In addition to their ongoing training, these volunteers donate numerous hours in their respective communities. Affiliated CERT volunteers assist at planned events, performing duties such as conducting crowd control as well as providing critical disaster preparedness information to the public. CERTs are also called into service during actual emergencies to provide logistical support for fire basecamps, assistance with evacuees and door-to-door notifications during emergencies. CERT is an important part of preparedness in San Bernardino County. This award recognizes the hard work of individuals who bring programs to their respective communities and their mission of “doing the greatest good, for the greatest number.”

CERT PM & TTT

23 participants from around California attended the CERT Program Manager (PM) course at the County Office of Emergency Services in Rialto. The two-day course was held on August 7-8 and helped equip new and existing CERT coordinators with the tools they need to make their programs a success. The CERT Program Manager course is offered annually each summer by County OES in addition to CERT Train-the-Trainer (TTT) offered each Spring. County OES’ next CERT TTT will be held April 1-3, 2016.



OES Volunteers Hit It Out of the Park!

On Saturday, April 18th over 170 San Bernardino County Fire, Office of Emergency Services (OES) volunteers, staff and guests spent a night out at the ballgame. The inaugural volunteer appreciation event was organized by County OES as a way to say “thank you” to its volunteers and took place at the Rancho Cucamonga Quakes’ LoanMart Field.

During an award ceremony before the game



CERT, ECS and Disaster Corps Leaders honored on the ball field



San Bernardino County Fire Honor Guard and Pipes and Drums presenting colors and honoring County OES volunteers

County OES Staff presented awards to outstanding volunteers for their service to each of the three volunteer programs. The highest honor, the Eagle Award was

Award Winners

- Ed and Bonnie Ross—Eagle Award
- Nancy Guinn - Morongo Basin CERT
- Phill Dupree - Emergency Communications Service
- Jeff Richardson - California Disaster Corps

announced during a special recognition on the field in front of all those in attendance. The Eagle Award is the highest award given by San Bernardino County Fire, Office of Emergency Services. The award is given to volunteers who go above and beyond in their service to their respective programs and the County as a whole. Recipients are characterized by a selfless nature, excellence in all they do, exceptional hours volunteered and a spirit of preparedness.



Ed Ross, co-recipient of the Eagle Award, throws out the first pitch

Action!

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Big Bear Valley CERT Member assists in feeding hundreds of evacuated children during the Lake Fire

were activated to distribute informational flyers regarding the excessive smoke inundating the Pioneertown community. The following day they staffed County Fire Station 38 to offer a place for firefighters, Sheriff Deputies and Highway Patrol Officers to rest, eat and hydrate. The operations at the station continued until June 30th.



EOC CERT Members organizing documentation

While Angelus Oaks and Mill Creek Canyon were placed on standby Big Bear Valley and Mountain CERTs were pressed into service and deployed to assist the Logistics Section of the Incident's Base Camp Located at Big Bear High School. CERT Members would



CERT Members prepare to distribute water and lunches to firefighters

work the next week assisting the Security Unit and Food Unit with everything from parking lot management to distribution of sack lunches, ice and water to firefighters headed out to the fire. While these tasks weren't covered in CERT Basic training, the CERT Members' familiarity with ICS and understanding that every role is important in an incident meant that volunteers served happily with a true sense of purpose.

As the fire progressed and evacuation orders expanded the deployed CERTs in Pioneertown responded to Copper Mountain



Big Bear Valley and Mountain CERT Members partner s in service

College to provide pre-shelter reception for evacuees until the American Red Cross was able to arrive and establish their shelter. On the mountain, CERT Members were also deployed to provide pre-shelter reception for 360 evacuated campers. pre-shelter reception is a program currently being developed to deploy CERT volunteers to identified shelter locations. The CERTs presence throughout the County and ability to arrive within minutes allows them to greet evacuees, provide information about the incident and send back important information like medical needs, language barriers, or any other needs to the EOC.

About a month later while the world watched replays of fire engulfing vehicles on Interstate 15, Phelan/Pinon Hills CERT was activated to provide pre-shelter reception during the North Fire which began July 17, 2015. The communities of Oak Hills and Wrightwood stood at the ready if further assistance was needed. Residents who were evacuated to Serrano High School due to the North Fire were met by CERT members from



Phelan/Pinon Hills CERT Member assists in offloading water during the North Fire

the Phelan/Pinon Hills CERT. The team was activated to receive evacuees and provide information until the American Red Cross arrived to establish the shelter. CERT members were able to help with donated water from the local Home Depot as well as provide comforting information to an evacuee regarding a wildlife refuge in the evacuated area. Once Red Cross arrived CERT members returned home. However, it would not be a quiet night. CERT members were called back in the middle of the night to assist the shelter staff with hundreds of



Morongo Basin CERT Members provide a respite for responders

additional evacuees from the Pines Fire outside of Wrightwood. 13 CERT Members donated over 95 hours of service within a 24hour period, again showing the dedication of our CERT members.

These activations highlight the strength of the CERT Programs and the value of CERT volunteers in "non-traditional" CERT roles. San Bernardino County Fire, OES couldn't be prouder of our volunteers!



CERT Grows in San Bernardino County



The Chemehuevi Tribe along with Highland and Yucaipa residents are taking steps to better prepare themselves, their families and their communities. In December County OES in cooperation with the San Manuel Fire Department provided Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Basic training to residents and employees of the Chemehuevi Tribe. Additionally, Highland



Highland residents learn to "P.A.S.S."

and Yucaipa recently held their own first CERT basic training courses. The packed classes were eagerly attended by residents who understand the importance of personal preparedness and wanted to do something about it.

The San Bernardino County Operational Area is pleased to welcome these communities to the County's CERT Family.



The City of Yucaipa's first CERT Basic Training is a smashing success!

CERT Ready to Fight

CERT volunteers from throughout San Bernardino County participated in Emergency Flood Fight training in preparation for possible effects from El Niño related flooding. The two courses, coordinated by the San Bernardino County Fire, Office of Emergency Services, were taught by instructors from the California Department of Water Resources. The December course was hosted by the City of Hesperia CERT and held at the city's public works facility. The second class in January was hosted by the San Manuel Tribal Emergency Response Team and conducted at the San Manuel Village. Both classes filled quickly and even with a collective attendance of over 125 participants there were still people on the waitlist.

The first portion of the day was spent indoors learning important tips on being properly equipped as well as the best methods for reducing damage to property from flooding. As always, safety was at the forefront of everything taught. The second part of the day was conducted outside and provided CERT volunteers the opportunity to practice the construction of various flood fighting structures. This included basics like how to properly fill, pass and set a sandbag as well as the more complex construction of a wave wash protection barrier.

These skills add another layer of preparedness among CERT volunteers and increase their ability to protect themselves, their families and their communities for the possible effects of El Niño.



CERT volunteers learn to safely and efficiently pass hundreds of sandbags



Wrightwood and Lytle Creek CERT Members work together to create wave wash protection

For information about CERT in your community visit www.SBCountyCERT.org or contact the San Bernardino County Fire, Office of Emergency Services at (909) 356-3998.



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