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

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.

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. 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.”

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 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.

Award Winners

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

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.
Action!
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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.

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

Phelan/Pinon Hills CERT Member assists in feeding hundreds of evacuated children during the Lake Fire

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

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 24 hour 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 Chemuevi 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

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.