

# 2019

## CERT POLICY HAND BOOK



North Coast Opportunities & Mendocino  
County Office of Emergency Services

7/26/19

Rebecca Enberg, CERT Program Director

# WELCOME

Dear Mendocino County CERT Volunteer,

On behalf of the Mendocino County Office of Emergency Services and NCO's Volunteer Network, welcome and thank you for joining our volunteer team.

Mendocino County needs volunteers like you who donate their time and talents to help local citizens in major emergencies and/or disasters, as well as support. We need volunteers to accomplish all of our goals. Thank you so much for making the Mendocino County CERT program part of your volunteer activities.

This handbook was created to provide you with information that will help to maximize your volunteer experience. Please take the time to read through it and refer back to it as questions arise.

Always feel free to contact us for additional information or to pass along suggestions or comments. The Volunteer Network staff can be reached at 707-462-1959.

Welcome to the Mendocino County CERT program.

Sincerely,

Richard Ehlert, Office of Emergency Services Program Manager

Rebecca Enberg, NCO Volunteer Network Program Director

## ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

Your CERT training and volunteer enrollment are important first steps to an exciting and rewarding volunteer experience which offers a variety of opportunities to serve your community. The following pages describe the benefits to our volunteers, in addition to policies and procedures that provide a framework for the services we deliver.

The information in this handbook is extensive but not complete. Each position has policies and procedures specific to the function you may perform.

You will learn much of the information regarding your responsibilities on the job. If you have any questions along the way, please contact us at 707-462-1959.

Please take the time to read this handbook carefully. Then sign and return the documents in Appendix A and B to the Volunteer Network office at:

North Coast Opportunities (NCO)  
Volunteer Network  
413 N State Street  
Ukiah, CA 95482

We wish you a rewarding experience as a CERT volunteer.

# Mendocino County: Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Coordination Guide

Version: 2017

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## Glossary

**CERT:** Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). This document uses “CERT Team” to avoid confusion; community emergency response groups comprised of volunteer community members who have been CERT trained by a certified CERT instructor.

**CERT Area:** the geographical area for which a CERT Team is responsible.

**CERT Area Coordinator:** The person responsible for coordinating and assisting all of the CERT teams in a geographical area. The CERT Area Coordinator reports to the CERT Team Coordinator.

**CERT Program:** Mendocino County CERT program is focused on CERT Training and CERT Coordination.

**CERT Program Manager:** NCO’s Volunteer Network program staff is responsible for creating self-sufficient CERT Teams through efforts such as planning, educating, recruiting, training, and other activities. The CERT Program Manager is responsible for the administrative and fiscal oversight of the CERT Program. The CERT Program Manager reports to the Office of Emergency Services Manager (OES).

**CERT Team Coordinator:** The CERT Team Coordinator is the person responsible for steering the general activities of the overall CERT Team(s) and providing CERT trainings to the community. The CERT Team Coordinator is responsible for the logistics and training oversight of the CERT Program. The CERT Team Coordinator reports to the CERT Program Manager.

**CERT Team:** broadly, the CERT Members in a CERT Area; more specifically, the CERT Members who coordinate to form an organized team.

**CERT Team Captain:** The CERT Team Captain is responsible for creating a self-sufficient CERT Team through efforts such as planning, educating, recruiting, practicing, and other activities. The Team Captain is the person responsible for steering the general activities of the local CERT Team and providing CERT trainings to the community. It should be the person best qualified to fulfill the duties of that position. The CERT Team Captain reports to the designated CERT Area Coordinator.

**CERT Team Leader:** The CERT Team Leader supervises a five (5) to seven (7) member local CERT team under the direction of the CERT team Captain.

**CERT Member:** a person who has received CERT training and agrees to participate in a minimum of 20 hours of additional trainings per year and operates under NCO Volunteer Network and Office of Emergency Services Mendocino CERT Team guidelines.

**Mendocino County Emergency Management Office-Office of Emergency Services:** County division that manages the County’s emergency preparedness and response efforts.

**Unity of Command:** Each CERT Team Member has only one person from whom he or she takes direction. In other words, each CERT Member has only one supervisor.

### **Mission of CERT**

Our mission shall be to organize and train volunteers within Mendocino County to become effective participants in our recovery after any disaster, to foster preparedness among all residents of Mendocino County for disaster recovery, and to cooperate and coordinate, upon request, with other local fire districts within Mendocino County and neighboring communities.

To carry out our mission, recruitment and classroom training is carried out under the organization structure defined in these Policies. When deployed in the field in a training activity or activated in response to an emergency or disaster, teams shall be organized under the direction of a CERT Team Captain reporting to an Incident Commander (if appropriate) in accordance with the procedures.

### **Mendocino County CERT**

Mendocino County recognizes the need for an organized and trained group of volunteers that can respond to a disaster or the imminent threat of disaster within Mendocino County. This group of volunteers is known as Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). CERT coordination is a partnership effort between NCO's Volunteer Network and Mendocino County's Office of Emergency Services (OES). The Volunteer Network is a community organization that connects volunteers with various opportunities in Mendocino County. The CERT program is one of the coordinated programs it administers. The volunteer work provided through CERT Teams is vital to an effective emergency response in both small and large-scale disasters and has proven valuable in isolated emergency situations. It has proven effective even in non-emergency events where a coordinated volunteer effort is needed.

### **CERT Coordination**

#### **The Volunteer Network – Mendocino CERT Team**

The structure of CERT will provide improved communications, management of resources, specific action plans and a better understanding of the events that are taking place prior to and during a disaster and how to respond to them. CERT also carries a big responsibility to act and function professionally during emergencies. This requires self-discipline and the ability to take direction from the leaders.

There are three basic categories of CERT graduates.

**Category 1** is comprised of persons who only want to take the course so they can better understand, prepare for, and respond to disasters in their own surroundings. They are not

interested in on-going training or in being a part of any CERT related community service projects. They benefit the community by being better able to respond should an emergency arise.

**Category 2** is comprised of persons who want to take part in on-going training. They may or may not be willing to take part in community service projects that CERT coordinators would arrange and establish or are not willing or able to take part in the management of on-going CERT activities. Mendocino County CERT needs to keep in contact with these persons to let them know of opportunities and have in place a communication system to contact them as needed.

**Category 3** is comprised of persons for whom CERT is a passion. They want to receive on-going training and, at least periodically, take part in special public service projects. They are the core of the CERT program. They help with training, they help with managing the CERT program, and they make themselves generally available whenever CERT needs them. These are people who are included within the CERT structure. It is for these CERT members that the following Standard Operating Guidelines are established.

### **Category 3 - CERT Disaster Service Worker Designation**

All Category 3 CERT team members will be given the designation as county *Disaster Service Workers (DSW)* when the CERT team is activated. To become a Category 3 team member and DSW, each Category 3 team member will be required to complete the FEMA ICS 100 and 700 courses, which may be taken online. They will then be required to fill out the county DSW Registration form, have a Live Scan fingerprint scan and complete a background check. Upon successful clearance of the background check, each Category 3 team member will be sworn-in as per Government Code sections 3102 and 3108-3109. Anyone who does not pass the background check or complete the registration form and swearing-in will be precluded from being a CERT team member.

## **Section 1: Membership**

1.1 The membership of Mendocino County CERT shall be volunteers of the community who are over the age of eighteen (18), and have successfully completed the required Federal CERT training as determined by the Office of Emergency Services Program Manager.

1.2 Individuals wishing to become Category 2 or Category 3 members of a Mendocino County CERT team will be required to fill out an application that will be provided at the final training session of the CERT training program, and return the application to the Team Leader.

1.3 Applicants will be subject to a background check and driver's license check if they wish to be a Category 3 member, as outlined above.

1.4 Upon activation, and prior to operating a motor vehicle, members must provide a current, valid driver's license and required proof of automobile insurance to the CERT Team Captain.

1.5 Mendocino County CERT memberships will be for a two (2) year period ending December 31 of each even year.

1.6 Persons participating in the Mendocino County CERT program agree to and will abide by the following rules and understand that members will be removed from membership for violation of the following:

1.6.1 Conviction of a felony

1.6.2 Conduct unbecoming

1.6.3 Any act of insubordination

1.6.4 Neglect of duty

1.6.5 Any flagrant violation of rules or guidelines governing this program

1.6.6 Failure to maintain annual training hours

## **Section 2: Administration**

2.1 The chain of command will be as follows:

2.1.a) Office of Emergency Services (OES)

2.1.b) CERT Program Manager

2.1.c) CERT Team Coordinator

2.1.d) CERT Area Coordinator

2.1.e) CERT Team Captains

2.1.f) CERT Team Leaders

2.1.g) CERT Team Members

2.2 In addition, the Mendocino County Disaster Council will have an advisory role and will make recommendations to the OES Program Manager and the CERT Program Manager.

## **Section 3: CERT Team Organization**

3.1 The community CERT Team is the basic level on which CERT Teams will be organized. Community CERT Teams are community groups that represent local interests in a portion of the County.

3.2 There will be one CERT Team within a given community.

3.3 The “span of control” principle states that each Team Leader may have 3-7 people who report to him or her, the optimal number being seven (7), though smaller teams may be formed.

3.4 If the number of CERT members in an area exceeds a manageable span of control, additional Team Leaders may be assigned.

3.5 Each CERT Team will have a CERT Team Captain. Until the CERT team has more members than the recommended span of control, the CERT Team Captain will also function as the CERT Team Leader.

3.6 CERT Team Captains are responsible for creating a self-sufficient CERT Team through efforts such as planning, educating, recruiting, practicing, and other activities. (Note: The Team Captain should be the person best qualified to fulfill the duties of that position.)

3.7 Upon CERT Team formation, the CERT Team Captains hold a kick-off meeting with the identified CERT Members and disseminate this “CERT Policy Guide”. They will



also conduct initial training on the basic CERT coordination framework, and give each member finger printing and background check information.

3.8 The CERT Team Captains hold regular meetings with the CERT Teams. These meetings can include approved training (notify NCO Volunteer Network of trainings and meetings), make specific team plans such as pre-designating leadership roles to team members; conduct drills and exercises, etc.

3.9 Team Captains report to and are supported by the CERT Area Coordinator.

3.10 The County of Mendocino is divided into CERT Geographical Areas. The boundaries for each CERT Geographical Area are recorded on the Mendocino County CERT Team Map maintained by the NCO Volunteer Network.

3.11 Each geographical area has a CERT Area Coordinator who is responsible for coordinating CERT Teams within that area. The CERT Team Captains report to the CERT Area Coordinator.

Until there are sufficient teams in the geographical areas, the CERT Team Coordinator will also function as the CERT Area Coordinator.

3.12 The CERT Team Coordinator has overall supervision of the county-wide CERT program in relation to field functions, training and logistics. The CERT Team Coordinator reports to the CERT Program manager.

#### **Section 4: Activation and Call-Out Procedures for Teams**

4.1 Mendocino County CERT Teams may be called upon by OES, or specifically identified public safety officials, to provide specific aid or assistance in a manner determined by the OES or Incident Commander.

4.2 CERT Teams will be activated by OES, or designee of OES, when an emergency or other event requires additional human resources for assistance and will follow the chain of command.

4.3 Mendocino County CERT trained individuals will act first to aid their families and adjacent neighbors.

4.4 The Team Captain will be contacted by OES or designee with activation deployment instructions prior to deployment.

4.5 Teams will be given specific instructions on where to go, or procedures to initiate to begin the response and recovery process by their Team Captain.

4.6 Upon arrival at the staging location, teams will select a team leader from those present if the assigned Team Captain is absent.

4.7 The Team Captain will provide for safety by assuring that all team members have completed CERT training, have the appropriate safety and other equipment necessary and are physically capable of performing the assigned tasks.

4.8 Team Captains will set priorities and delegate responsibility and specific assignments for each team member.

4.9 Teams will always have a minimum of two (2) members before activating, and those teammates shall stay together until reassigned.

4.10 Team Captains will be responsible for the team communications with the Mendocino County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and Incident Commander at the scene of deployment.

- 4.11 Team members will communicate only with the team leader as pre-instructed using NIMS/ICS span of control procedures.
- 4.12 Team members must stay together as assigned and will not “free lance” away from their assigned task.
- 4.13 Team members will only perform tasks equal to their level of training, and at no time will they attempt to perform tasks beyond their scope of training and the assignment directive.
- 4.14 Team leaders and members will “stand by” for further instructions after they have completed the assigned task(s), and will await further deployment or dismissal instructions from OES or the Incident Commander.
- 4.15 After dismissal from the incident, each team will return to their predetermined staging location to critique the situation. The team leader will, as soon as possible, contact the Director of Emergency Management to convey the results of the team’s critique of the deployment.

**There are no exceptions to 4.1 through 4.15 of Section 4: Activation. This is for the safety of the Team Members.**

- 4.16 Activation for Other Events (Within Mendocino County)
- 4.16.1 Mendocino County CERT teams may be called upon for special occasion functions, such as parades, large community events, etc. The CERT teams may also be utilized to assist with crowd control, lost person searches, or any other type of light duty functions that require human resources.
- 4.16.2 When the CERT teams are activated for these types of events, the same organizational structure and chain of command will be followed as previously outlined in these guidelines to insure accountability and safety to all members and the public that we are assisting.
- 4.17 Activation Outside of Mendocino County
- 4.17.1 Mendocino County CERT team(s) may be activated for out-of-county response only at the direction of the OES or designee.
- 4.17.2 CERT team members who are deployed outside of our county must be prepared to sustain themselves for a period of 24-hours (money, fuel, etc.).
- 4.17.3 Mendocino County Emergency Management will provide directions and point of contact for the deployed team(s).
- 4.17.4 The receiving Emergency Management Director or designee is responsible for the localized deployment and accountability of the deployed team(s).
- 4.17.5 The requesting agent will provide the following information to Mendocino County Emergency Management:
- ☐ What skill levels they need
  - ☐ What tools the team should bring
  - ☐ When the team is needed
  - ☐ When the team will be released
  - ☐ Where the team will report
  - ☐ Who the team will be under the direction of
  - ☐ Who the team will report to
  - ☐ How many team members are needed

- ☐ How long the team members will be needed
- ☐ Other pertinent information

## **Section 5: Equipment**

5.1 Mendocino County CERT Team members (Category 3 only) are provided with basic personal protective equipment (PPE) in a backpack upon the successful completion of the FEMA approved CERT training course and local background check. These backpacks and the equipment supplied with them become the property of the individual. The provision of these supplies is contingent upon the continued funding of the Mendocino County Office of Emergency Services.

5.2 Mendocino County CERT Team members are responsible for replenishing their own supplies contained within their backpacks. Personal protective equipment (PPE) that is issued to the CERT Team members and becomes unserviceable will be replaced by the CERT program.

5.3 The Mendocino County Office of Emergency Services will provide funding for equipment and supplies for training and activation. The equipment and supplies are maintained and distributed through the Mendocino County Office of Emergency Services.

5.4 Persons participating in the Mendocino County CERT program agree to and understand that equipment and supplies provided to them for training and/or activation is the property of the Mendocino County Office of Emergency Services.

5.5 Members will use the equipment and supplies provided only for Mendocino County CERT training sessions and/or activations, unless otherwise directed.

5.6 Members will maintain equipment and supplies in proper working condition.

5.7 Members will report damaged equipment and supplies to the CERT Team Coordinator immediately. The CERT Team Coordinator will then notify the Office of Emergency Services Manager.

## **Section 6: Training/Recertification Requirements**

6.1 Mendocino County CERT team members will be required to attend a minimum of twenty (20) hours of training per membership year no more than six (6) of which may be “on-line” internet based training to maintain membership status.

### **6.1.1 Mandatory training**

6.1.1.a Annual CERT class attendance – CERT team members will be required to attend one (1) full CERT training class during which time they will act as auditors during the skills and exercise portion of the class. Category II and III members should remember that the skills and exercise portions of classes are designed to instill confidence and team-building skills in the current class members. Existing CERT team members should not inject themselves as leaders during these classes, but rather utilize these classes as an opportunity to enhance their own skills.

6.1.2 Training/recertification hours may include participation in emergency or solicited activations; public information activities; meeting attendance; subcommittee activities.

6.1.3 It is the responsibility of each member to receive the required hours of continuing training each year to renew membership and to provide appropriate proof (i.e. certificate, attendance roster, letter of appreciation, etc.) to the CERT Program Manager.

**The following is a list of suggested minimal contents of your CERT backpack:**

- ☐ CERT ID
- ☐ CERT vest
- ☐ CERT safety helmet
- ☐ Calling tree
- ☐ work gloves
- ☐ goggles
- ☐ dust masks
- ☐ examination gloves
- ☐ utility knife
- ☐ flash light or miner's lamp
- ☐ extra batteries and bulbs
- ☐ secondary flash light
- ☐ small battery operated radio
- ☐ thick black marker
- ☐ clip board
- ☐ whistle
- ☐ duct tape
- ☐ weather protection
- ☐ Field Operating Guide
- ☐ note paper and pencil
- ☐ bottle of water
- ☐ personal first aid kit
- ☐ space blanket
- ☐ toiletries
- ☐ personal medications
- ☐ IF you wear eyeglasses pack an extra pair
- ☐ personal snacks

Other items we have found useful:

- ☐ Pocket warmers, matches or lighter, crescent wrench, Swiss army type knife or Leatherman type combination tool, sun screen, bug repellent, poison oak wash, sunglasses, light sticks, plastic bags

An additional '**GO BAG**' could include:

- ☐ Changes of clothing, boots, more weather protection, more extensive toiletry bag, food, more drinking water, deck of cards or other small games



## Community Emergency Response Team

### Member Enrollment Form – Appendix A

**Please print and complete all sections.**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ BIRTH DATE \_\_\_\_\_

STREET ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ CITY, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ CITY, ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE# \_\_\_\_\_ CELL PHONE# \_\_\_\_\_ FAX# \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

ETHNIC GROUP: Caucasian African-American Native American/Alaskan  
Hispanic Asian Pacific Islander Other

PHYSICAL/MEDICAL LIMITATIONS/SPECIAL NEEDS \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a car? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Driver's License# \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

EMERGENCY CONTACT \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

**BENEFICIARY FOR CERT SUPPLEMENTAL ACCIDENT INSURANCE:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone# \_\_\_\_\_

**CERT may use photos/videos taken of me in my volunteer service for public awareness and educational purposes:** ☐ Yes ☐ No

I understand that to become a CERT member, I must take the disaster service worker oath of service. I understand that to be part of the Mendocino County OES CERT, I may be fingerprinted and undergo a background check.

Signature of Volunteer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of NCO Staff \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

NORTH COAST OPPORTUNITIES, INC. (NCO)  
413 North State St., Ukiah, CA 95482  
707-462-1959 FAX 707-462-0191

# CERT CODE OF CONDUCT

## Appendix B

The Mendocino County CERT program is an active and respected program in the County. This has been achieved due to the dedication and commitment of our volunteer members, who continually strive to be a resource to the Mendocino County communities. You represent the CERT program to new members, to the public, and to those to whom we render our services. It is important to portray a positive image.

As a volunteer with the CERT program, you are expected to comply with the following:

1. Dial 911 for all emergencies, first.
2. Know you are not a professional first responder. You are trained in CERT and may serve as an extension of the Mendocino County Office of Emergency Services (OES) in response to disasters or other projects such as preparing sand bags, helping with crowd control, operating a first aid station, when such circumstances exist or when directed by emergency services officials. When disaster occurs, your first responsibility is to ensure your own safety and the safety of your family. After, you can respond if called on by NCO's Volunteer Network or OES to join with other CERT members.
3. Do not self-deploy to local events (fires, accidents, etc.). Only the CERT Call-Out Teams that are requested by OES or Volunteer Network may respond.
4. Stay within the scope of your training. You have been trained under the curriculum of FEMA's Community Emergency Response Team program and possible other trainings. Confine your actions to those guidelines and stay within the scope of your training and certification.
5. Bring or wear your personal safety equipment: helmet (no baseball hats), vest, goggles, gloves (rubber/latex and leather), sturdy shoes, long pants, flashlight (with extra batteries), bottled water, non-perishable food, and your CERT ID Badge. Bring any other items you feel appropriate or directed by Officials. Absolutely no shorts, sandals or open-toed shoes are allowed!!
6. Confine your actions to your physical and resource limitations when responding as a member of CERT. Such limitations may be determined by, but not limited to, equipment available, physical abilities, knowledge, authority and hazards.
7. Conduct yourself with professionalism, dignity and pride, and act appropriately and responsibly at all times while assisting others.
8. Treat fellow team members, visitors, other volunteer program participants, guests, and property with respect and courtesy.
9. Be sensitive to the diversity of team members and those we assist.
10. Direct anyone who is looking for official statements from Mendocino County CERT to the Mendocino County OES Public Informational Officer (PIO).
11. Respect the privacy of persons served by Mendocino CERT and hold, in confidence, all sensitive, private, and personal information.
12. Keep NCO's Volunteer Network CERT Program Manager informed of any progress, concerns, or problems with tasks which you have been assigned.
13. Partake of no alcohol while responding as CERT and do not report for duty while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
14. You are forbidden to carry guns or other weapons, unless authorized to do so by law. You can have multipurpose tools, pliers, screwdrivers, wrenches, etc. You have been trained for immediate disaster response and there is no need, place or legal authorization for you to carry or use any of the above. To do so will jeopardize your own safety and the continued existence of the CERT program in Mendocino County.
15. You shall not authorize the use of, or use for the benefit or advantage of any person, the name, emblem, endorsement, services or property of the Mendocino County CERT program, without the approval of the CERT Program Manager.

16. You shall not accept, or seek on behalf of any other person, any money or gifts offered as a result of your affiliation with the CERT program.

## **CERT CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **Appendix B Continued**

17. You shall not use your participation in CERT to promote any partisan politics, religious matters or positions on any issue.
18. You shall avoid inappropriate conduct, both on- and off-duty, that would jeopardize program effectiveness. Such behavior includes, but is not limited to, the following:
- a. Offensive or profane language or gestures
  - b. Public criticism of a CERT team member, its leaders or the CERT program
  - c. Jeopardizing another team member's safety.
19. Mendocino County CERT is committed to a policy of fair representation and will not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, age, disability, gender, color, religion, sexual orientation, geography, or group affiliations. Volunteers will adhere to these same standards in the course of their duties.

ALL VIOLATIONS WILL BE THOROUGHLY INVESTIGATED. DURING THE INVESTIGATION PROCESS, INVOLVED MEMBERS WILL BE TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED FROM ALL CERT ACTIVITIES, PENDING THE OUTCOME OF THE INVESTIGATION. SAID MEMBERS WILL BE NOTIFIED AS TO THEIR STATUS WITH THE CERT PROGRAM BY THE CERT LEADER. PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE INCLUDES, BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO; COUNSELING, WRITTEN NOTICE AND RESTRICTION OF INVOLVEMENT WITH THE MENDOCINO COUNTY CERT PROGRAM IN CERT COMMUNITY MEETINGS, TRAININGS AND REFRESHERS.

I understand the above CERT code of conduct and agree to follow it to the absolute best of my ability.

---

Signature

Date

7.26.19