

## What is CERT?

*CERT* is the acronym for “*Community Emergency Response Team*”. The concept arose in California about 1985. A CERT team is a group of volunteers which, after training in CPR, Shelter Management, First Aid, and the National Incident Command System, are available to assist Fire and Police should a community emergency overwhelm the capacity of these first line responders.

In Wellesley, the CERT group was created about two and one half years ago under a grant to the Wellesley Fire and Rescue Department. Led by Chief Rick DeLorie and Deputy Chief Jeff Peterson, the team is about 15 members strong. It meets monthly except July and August. Membership is about equally men and women, all having a diverse background of life experiences, but a common dedication to community service.

As the CERT concept has taken hold across the country, however, CERTs have become much more than originally envisioned. CERTs have proven themselves to be an active and vital part of their communities' preparedness and response capability. For example, CERTs have been used to:

- Distribute and/or install smoke alarms and batteries to the elderly and disabled.
- Assist with evacuations and traffic control.
- Promote community awareness of potential hazards and preparedness measures.
- Supplement staffing at special events, such as parades.
- Act as victims in training exercises.

Wellesley residents may have seen the green-vests of CERT members assisting during the Boston Marathon; during Wellesley Week Firehouse Open House; or passing out water salvage and cleanup materials subsequent to the recent spring rains.

CERTs do NOT:

- Suppress large fires.
- Enter structures that they consider heavily damaged and dangerous (e.g., leaning or moved from foundation).
- Perform hazardous materials cleanup or respond to incidents involving radiological, chemical, or biological agents.
- Perform medical, fire, or search and rescue operations beyond their level of training.
- Activate or deploy unless called for in their procedures.

CERTs are considered "Good Samaritans" and covered under the Volunteer Protection Act. CERT volunteers do not have any authority beyond serving as "Good Samaritan" when helping others.

Much more information about CERT and CERT participation can be found at <http://www.citizen corps.gov/cert/>