

ORANGE COUNTY TEXAS



STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES & CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS PLAN

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I. OVERVIEW AND MISSION

A. PURPOSE

The Orange County Texas Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program is part of the local and national Citizen Corps effort to incorporate and utilize volunteers in the community. Citizen Corps is endorsed by the President and the Department of Homeland Security. Orange County CERT members are trained in basic response techniques in order to assist local citizens and first responders in disaster or emergency situations.

The purpose of the Orange County Texas CERT Concept of Operations Plan and Standard Operating Guidelines is to:

1. Outline the concept of operations organization.
2. Specify procedures for CERT activation.
3. Establish CERT training and equipment requirements.
4. Define CERT team functions, capabilities, and limitations.

This helps to insure an organized and efficient response to a large-scale emergency or disaster occurring in Southeast Texas.

B. MISSION

The mission of the CERT program is to rapidly respond as a team to assist local responders, communities, private agencies and/or state and federal agencies in a large-scale emergency or disaster.

CERT teams are designed to support first responders or Emergency Operations Center support functions.

CERT Mission Statement:

TO PROVIDE AREA RESIDENTS AND FIRST RESPONDERS A QUALITY RESOURCE FOR SAFETY EDUCATION, HAZARD MITIGATION, EMERGENCY RESPONSE ASSISTANCE, AND OTHER VOLUNTEER EFFORTS.

C. GOALS

The goals of the CERT program are:

1. To do the greatest good for the greatest amount of people.
2. To maintain team readiness through ongoing training and meetings.
3. To gain and maintain acknowledgement and respect from area first responders and residents.
4. To maintain professionalism in all areas within the scope of the program.
5. To focus great effort in maintaining the safety, in ordered importance, of ourselves, team members, and all other victims or rescuers.

D. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the CERT program are to establish and maintain teams of qualified and trained individuals who can execute the following:

1. Augment the local emergency services and emergency management officials with trained individuals.
2. Assist law enforcement functions including traffic direction and security.
3. Assist in victim triage and rescue.
4. Assist with sheltering, mass feeding and other support function staffing.
5. Integrate operations with other CERT teams as directed by other first responders.
6. Provide communications capability with individual team members and coordinate communications with other CERT teams.

II. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. GENERAL

The CERT program is a key component of the Orange County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) Program and works with the Orange County Office of Emergency Management (OEM). The teams are designed to provide assistance to first responders during a long-term incident. The teams are also capable of providing direct support to communities and/or private agencies within the scope of emergency management support functions.

The teams currently consist of members from Orange County.

The CERT teams are based on a seven to fifteen-member concept with a Team Leader and two Assistant Team Leaders. Teams are strategically located throughout the county for timely response and are based on the locations of members' homes.

B. OPERATION RESPONSIBILITIES

The CERT Executive Committee oversees the CERT Program.

The CERT Executive Committee consists of:

- Committee Chairman
- CERT Coordinator/Deputy Coordinator
- Training Director
- Health/Safety Director
- Emergency Services Director
- Finance/Supply Director
- Communications/Logistics Director
- Public Information Officer

Additional support includes a:

- Recording Secretary
- Sergeant-at-Arms

Duties may be combined if enough CERT members are not available to fill all committee positions. The CERT Executive Committee should meet monthly.

The CERT program supports local incident commanders, local emergency responders and other support agencies within the emergency management system.

CERT teams are neither designed or intended to serve as initial first responders on a scene but can provide additional resources as “second” responders if the event requires it.

The CERT program enables the Incident Commander to utilize CERT teams in non-critical functions allowing first responders to be utilized in critical areas.

In a large-scale situation where the first response system is overwhelmed and delayed, CERT team members will provide assistance in their homes, neighborhoods, and local communities until first responders arrive.

CERT Teams will consist of a Team Leader, two Assistant Team Leaders, and approximately 7 to 15 other team members. Each team will have members who are trained and physically able to perform specific duties.

These duties include:

- Injury assessment / First Aid
- Light search and rescue
- Communications
- Supply / Logistics

III. TEAM IDENTIFICATION

It is essential that CERT members maintain a professional level in both emergency and non-emergency activations. Team members are issued identification cards for both identification and accountability purposes. When performing CERT functions, members must display appropriate identification.

A. IDENTIFICATION CARDS

Identification cards will be worn on the outermost garment at all times. If the card is lost it will be the responsibility of the team member to replace it prior to the participation in another event. CERT members will not be allowed to participate in any activation functions of the program without a proper ID.

B. APPAREL

In emergency situations, members must wear the issued green CERT vest and hard hat. Members need to dress for the conditions and should always wear pants and work boots. During non-emergency situations, members need to wear either the issued CERT vest or other purchased clothing containing the CERT logo. It is the responsibility of the team member to maintain all garments in a presentable manner. Purchased CERT apparel will not be worn in any inappropriate locations, such as bars. When wearing CERT apparel, members must maintain a professional demeanor.

C. SIGNAGE/MARKINGS

Members can display up to a 3 x 5 CERT sticker in the bottom corner of the rear or front window of their vehicle. If a member chooses to utilize any other form of CERT signage/markings on their vehicles, it will only be allowed during official CERT functions and it must be approved by the Orange County CERT Executive Board and OCEM. All driving laws must be followed when displaying CERT signage.

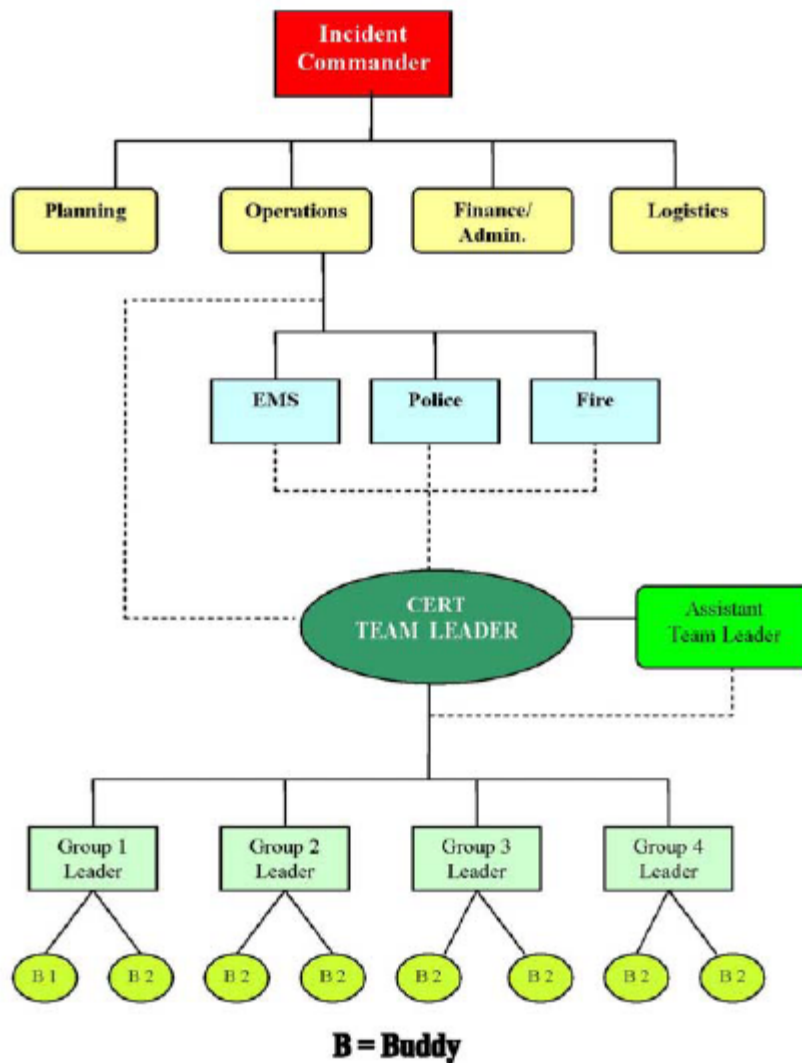
IV. TEAM ORGANIZATION

A. PURPOSE

The CERT Coordinator/Deputy Coordinator is responsible for coordinating with the Orange County Office of Emergency Management on program direction, overseeing administrative functions, and insuring interoperability with other CERT teams, first responders, and emergency management support functions. The following tables show guidelines for the breakdown of command in emergency and non-emergency roles.

Table 4.1 - Emergency Roles IC

Guideline for CERT in the Incident Command Structure



Guideline for CERT in the EOC Structure

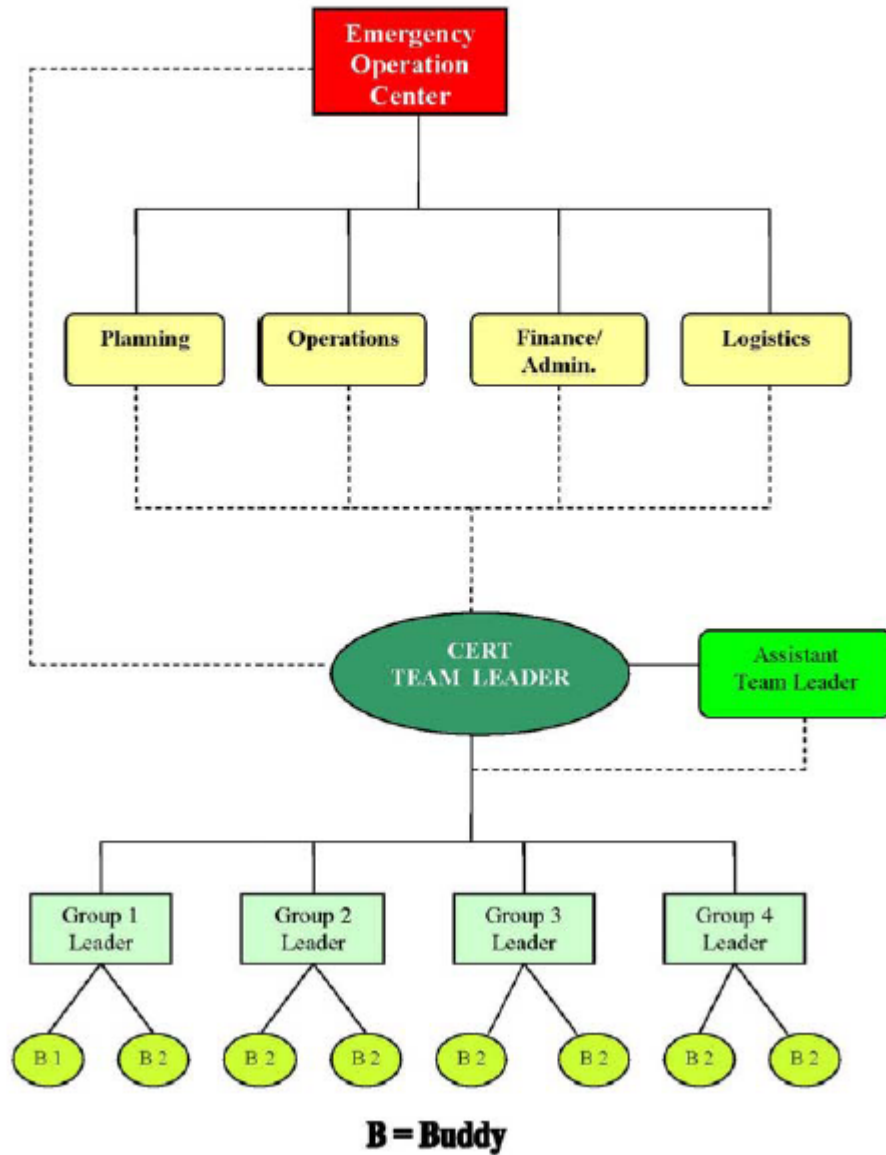
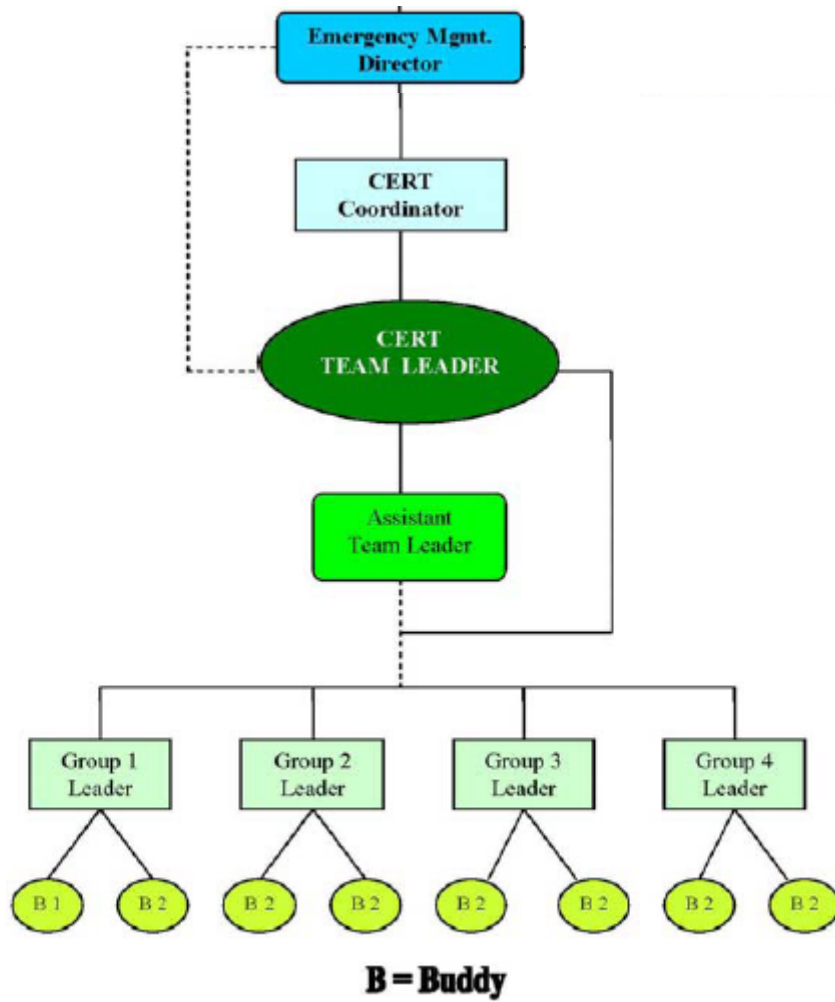


Table 4.3 – Nonemergency Roles



B. LOCATIONS

Teams are located throughout Orange County. Teams may assist officials in other counties of the Southeast Texas Region if requested and approved by the Orange County OEM and CERT Coordinator/Deputy Coordinator.

C. TEAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Team Advisory Committee will consist of the CERT Training Director and the Team Leader of each team.

The CERT program will maintain a level of training for all teams to assist in the standardized response in the event of multi-team activation.

The Team Advisory Committee responsibilities consist of the following:

1. Identify training needs for CERT teams,
2. Assist in exercise design, and
3. Review team procedures to insure they are current and coordinated.

The Team Advisory Committee should meet a minimum of once per quarter.

D. TEAM ORGANIZATION AND POSITION DESCRIPTIONS

1. Team Leader

Team Leaders are appointed by the CERT Executive Committee or elected by team members. Instead of directing team members' work, team leaders facilitate team activities toward goal accomplishment. Team leaders are not ultimately responsible for their team's performance, however, they help their teams plan, learn to solve problems, and work effectively with each other. A team leader should enjoy coaching, working with people, and bringing about improvement through hands-off guidance and leadership.

During large-scale emergencies, CERT teams become an integral part of the command and control structure upon arrival at a staging area. The command and control staff of the affected jurisdiction must understand the role and training level of CERT teams when deploying them as a resource. The Team Leader will be the central point of coordination for the teams and will receive information from responsible parties.

The Team Leader will be an individual who has demonstrated through training, knowledge and experience that he/she is capable of leading the team before and during the stressful environment of a large-scale emergency or disaster. This individual will have the capability to manage and seek advice from a diverse group of people and ensure the team has an integrated approach during a critical incident. The Team Leader must possess knowledge of team functions, operations, and safety.

2. Assistant Team Leaders

Assistant Team Leaders provide necessary support for the Team Leader to manage and account for all team members. They follow the direction of the Team Leader and assume the roles he or she assigns to them. They assist Team Leaders in planning and coordination efforts. Assistant Leaders must be able to spontaneously step up to a Team Leader position in cases when the Team Leader is unavailable. This means the Assistant Team Leaders must be familiar with and fluent in all of the Team Leader's responsibilities.

3. Team Members

The CERT program is intended to provide a coordinated response for assisting first responders in large-scale emergency situations. Team members will maintain a level of training in order to effectively respond to a situation. Team members work under the direction of the Team Leader and/or Assistant Leaders. They help plan and carry out all team functions. **Every team member is responsible for the actions of their team.**

V. TEAM ACTIVATION

A. INTRODUCTION

A CERT team may become involved in critical incidents at the request of a local community or first responder agency through the Office of Emergency Management, and/or the Department of Homeland Security.

B. REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE

CERT teams can be activated for support in emergency or non-emergency situations.

1. The Office of Emergency Management and the CERT Executive Committee are responsible for the overall coordination of the development, maintenance and utilization of CERT teams. During large-scale incidents, the site specific Incident Commander and the respective Emergency Operation Center are organized to respond to and mitigate the consequences of incidents within their jurisdictions.

2. Request for CERT team assistance will be through the Office of Emergency Management. Procedures for authorization and notification are in place.

C. ACTIVATION

Upon authorization CERT team(s) will be activated by pagers, telephones, cell phones, and/or announcements on locally authorized radio and television stations using the emergency alert system. CERT Team Leaders will contact their team members.

CERT will activate when authorized by the OEM and if:

- A. Requested by a local response agency.
- B. Requested by a private response organization.
- C. The CERT Executive Committee becomes aware of a situation that may warrant the assistance of a CERT team.

D. NOTIFICATION

Different levels of team activation are available depending on the magnitude of the incident and the specific type of incident. The Office of Emergency Management will keep CERT leadership apprised of the notification of a team. The following levels are utilized:

1. Alert

An alert is intended only to inform CERT teams of the potential for or the occurrence of an event. An alert does not constitute a directive to begin any response.

2. Mobilization

A request for mobilization of a CERT team is intended to have team members report to a staging area with all of their equipment for possible deployment. When responding to the staging area, ALL traffic laws will be obeyed! The CERT Coordinator/Deputy Coordinator with the approval of the Incident Commander will initiate a response or cancellation of the mobilization.

3. Deployment

The CERT team upon activation will report to the staging area for deployment. **Individual response to an incident is prohibited** unless authorized by the CERT Coordinator/Deputy Coordinator.

Deploying CERT members will bring all necessary equipment and personal necessities for a 48-hour period.

Activated CERT members can be utilized to assist with basic scene or support functions including:

- Basic First Aid
- Triage of Victims
- Extinguishment of small incipient phase fires utilizing makeshift aids or fire extinguishers. (NOTE – No interior firefighting is allowed and CERT members will not be in a position where smoke inhalation or heat endangers their safety).
- Light Search and Rescue to include cribbing/leveraging and removal of patients from danger.
- Setting up treatment, rehab or similar sectors.
- Maintaining accountability for fellow CERT members.
- Supervising CERT sectors or groups.
- Any other operation required to remedy a given scenario that does not directly endanger the CERT members or move outside of their scope of practice.

NOTE: Many members of CERT have skills beyond what is taught through the CERT program e.g. physicians and other health professionals, heavy equipment operators, etc. While these skills may be helpful during an emergency or disaster, they are outside the CERT scope of practice as a CERT member.

E. CANCELLATION

When an alert, mobilization, or deployment order has been issued and subsequent information indicates CERT assistance is not required, the CERT Coordinator / Co-Coordinator will issue a notice of cancellation to the Team Leaders.

All incident commanders and first responders may remove a CERT member from a scene for any reason as they see fit.

F. SELF DEPLOYMENT/FREELANCING

Team members should not self deploy to an incident. Deployment will be as a team. If a person self deploys he/she will forfeit all protection from liability provided by the CERT program. Assistance may be given to an injured person if the CERT member is currently qualified in first aid training through the Red Cross and no first responder is available. The CERT member may continue to assist the first responder(s) if requested to do so. At no time should the CERT member place his/her self in a dangerous situation.

G. WEAPONS

CERT members are not permitted to carry or possess any weapons while undertaking activities as a CERT member unless authorized by the Incident Commander.

H. FITNESS FOR SERVICE

No CERT member will be deployed if he/she is under the influence of alcohol and/or illegal drugs. The use of legal drugs should be avoided during deployment if use could impact the safety of the CERT member or others. If a CERT member feels he/she is not fit for service they should notify the person in leadership of them.

VI. TRAINING AND EXERCISING

A. INTRODUCTION

The CERT team concept is intended to provide additional support resources in non-critical functions during large-scale situations and also provide non-emergency support functions during non-emergency situations. To be prepared to respond, team personnel must maintain a minimal level of training.

B. TRAINING GUIDELINES

The CERT training program is based on maintaining a skill level to assist in the basic life saving efforts until the first response system is activated and an effective response is initiated. Personnel must also possess the knowledge required to accomplish this effectively without the threat of becoming secondary casualties.

1. Individual Training

Every month specific training topics for all CERT members will be scheduled. Members must attend 1/3 or 4 out of 12 of these training sessions to maintain their membership in the CERT program. These are normally conducted at the monthly CERT meeting.

Additional specialized training will be periodically scheduled for individuals that may have specific interests. The Red Cross will provide free first aid and CPR training if the CERT member also becomes a Red Cross Disaster Assistance Team member.

2. Team Training and Meetings

Each team (or region) must conduct team training sufficient to insure proficiency in the objectives of the team. The CERT Training Director is responsible for insuring the team conducts their training in sufficient detail and frequency. It is recommended that team training occur at a minimum, every three months. It is anticipated that newly formed teams will need to train more often to obtain desired proficiency that may be required at an incident. This training can be held during team meetings.

Some examples of the types of team training that are necessary will include first aid, triage, rescue, utility shutoff, use of personal protective equipment, and communications.

Each team should meet **at least** quarterly - every three months. Meetings should promote active discussion among members regarding news, events, policies, plans, and ideas or concepts. All members should attend at least four team meetings per year.

C. REQUIRED TRAINING

Due to their mission, the CERT team(s) may respond and operate in several different environments and be responsible for numerous functions. All CERT members must receive an appropriate level of training necessary for their function.

1. Basic CERT training

All team members are required to successfully complete the 20-hour basic CERT training.

2. Advanced CERT training

Members must attend 1/3 of the monthly trainings to maintain their membership in the CERT program.

Members must attend CERT Meetings, CERT Training Exercises and/or CERT refresher courses annually.

3. Incident Command Training

All committee members and team leaders must complete Incident Command training annually to maintain their status for field response. Team members are encouraged to also complete annual Incident Command training.

VII. EQUIPMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

Equipping a CERT team is a significant commitment by the OEM/LEPC. Properly selected and maintained equipment is essential to insure the team is capable of responding to a major event.

B. PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Each CERT member is issued equipment that he/she is responsible for. This equipment must be properly maintained and readily available for response to a situation. Members must bring equipment to the staging area. The equipment provided includes but not limited to:

- Backpack
- Flashlight
- Eye Protection
- Hard Hat
- Gloves
- First Aid Supplies
- CERT Vest
- Tools

C. EQUIPMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Team leaders will inventory each member's equipment bag twice per year and report to the CERT Executive Committee. If equipment is missing or damaged, a committee member will address the issue with the team member.

If the member leaves the team, the equipment will be returned to his/her Team Leader or another active CERT member within two weeks of notification. Unreturned equipment will be replaced at the previous member's expense.

VIII. COMMUNICATIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

A pre-defined and effective communications strategy for the CERT program is required to support the mission and goals of the program.

This section supports:

- Overall communications plan
- Communication procedures for alerting, mobilizing and deploying teams
- Communications between the EOC and/or Incident Commander and CERT teams
- Communication between members and teams at the incident site
- Communications terminology
- General communications procedures
- Reporting

B. AVAILABLE COMMUNICATIONS

The following equipment and communication system resources are capable of being utilized for CERT communications.

1. Commercial telephone and fax service is typically maintained by private companies and work under normal conditions. Outages may occur when infrastructure has been impacted or when the services are experiencing unusually heavy demand.
2. In-house portable radio.
3. Government furnished mobile radios for onsite operations.
4. Amateur Radio Communications (many CERT members are licensed amateur radio operators). CERT members are encouraged to obtain an amateur radio operators license.

C. COMMUNICATIONS TERMINOLOGY

1. Using common terminology and terms when communicating is essential using a common system. This system would utilize clear text and common language in both communications and call signs in order to:
 - a. Function according to Incident Command Standards
 - b. Facilitate communication of information at an incident scene
 - c. Ease identification of different responsibilities
 - d. Identify units by function and/or geographic assignment
 - e. Identify all units in clear text

2. The following rules of communication will apply to CERT team operations:

- a. The use of “10” codes will not be used
- b. Plain text will be used at all times
- c. Conversations should be clear, concise and short to minimize tying up the talk-group or channel
- d. The words “CODE RED” should be announced over the radio when scene is no longer under control or personnel are in immediate danger

3. It is important when initiating a conversation on a radio system to first identify the unit being called by the unit calling.

4. The person initiating a conversation is responsible for announcing “clear” when he/she is through communicating on the radio. This will let others know that the conversation is completed and they may use the talk-group or frequency.

D. GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURES

Each team member will operate in the operational channel assigned at the incident.

IX. GROUNDS FOR REMOVAL

All CERT members are subject to dismissal from the program for any reason as appropriated by his/her CERT Team Leader. Some examples of actions that could result in removal from the CERT program are: *(The following are intended as examples and should not be considered all-inclusive reasons for dismissal.)*

- Self-deployment to an incident or scene
- Unauthorized use of CERT signage or logos.
- Unprofessional or aggressive behavior toward other CERT members, residents, first responders, or other authorities.
- Failure to follow the direction of authorities.
- Being found guilty of crime by a judge or jury.

A dismissed CERT member can appeal the decision to the CERT Executive Committee. After a member has been removed, he or she must return all equipment provided by the CERT program within two weeks. This person will be charged for non-returned items.

XI. CONCLUSION

The CERT program is a very valuable resource to Orange County Texas when operating in its intended functions. All members are respected components of the CERT system. These Standard Operating Guidelines help insure proper orientation of the program and its members. Each member is responsible for understanding and following these guidelines.

Standard Operating Guidelines



I have read and understand the CERT Standard Operating Guidelines. I agree to follow these guidelines while participating in the Orange County Texas CERT program. I understand that not following these guidelines may result in my removal from the program.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

CERT Region/Team