

## **Willmar Area Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) is a Volunteer Opportunity**

**Mission: The Willmar Area Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) serves our community through emergency preparedness education and volunteer support for Public Safety.**

The Willmar Area CERT was started in 2018 and currently has over 70 members who have successfully completed the training.

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program educates volunteers about disaster preparedness for the hazards that may impact their area, and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. CERT offers a consistent, nationwide approach to volunteer training and organization that professional responders can rely on during disaster situations, which allows them to focus on more complex tasks. Through CERT, the capabilities to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters is built and enhanced.

At the same time, the CERT program was designed as a grassroots initiative and specifically structured so that the local and state program managers have the flexibility to form their programs in a way that best suits their communities. CERT volunteers are trained to respond safely, responsibly, and effectively to emergency situations, but they can also support their communities during non-emergency events as well. There are over 2,700 local CERT programs nationwide, with more than 600,000 individuals trained since CERT became a national program.

FEMA's Community Emergency Response Team Program trains volunteers to prepare for the types of disasters that their community may face. Through hands-on practice and realistic exercises, CERT members:

- Learn how to safely respond to manmade and natural hazards.
- Help organize basic disaster response
- Promote preparedness by hosting and participating in community events.

### **Course Overview:**

The CERT Basic Course is delivered in the community by a team of first responders and other qualified volunteers. The organization and timing of training and meeting varies from program to program. It is often broken up into two to four hour blocks over a series of evenings or weekends.

- **Disaster Preparedness:** Addresses hazards specific to the community. Materials cover actions that participants and their families take before, during, and after a disaster, as well as an overview of CERT and local laws governing volunteers.
- **Fire Suppression:** Covers fire chemistry, hazardous materials, fire hazards and fire suppression strategies. However, the thrust of this session is the safe use of fire extinguishers, controlling utilities and extinguishing a small fire.
- **Medical Operations Part I:** Participants practice diagnosing and treating airway obstruction, bleeding and shock, by using simple triage and rapid treatment techniques.

- **Medical Operations Part II:** Covers evaluating patients by doing a heads-to-toe assessment, establishing a medical treatment area, and performing basic first aid.
- **Light Search and Rescue Operations:** Participants learn about search and rescue planning, size-up, search techniques, rescue techniques, and rescuer safety.
- **Psychology and Team Organization:** Covers signs and symptoms that might be experienced by the disaster victim and workers, and addresses CERT organization and management.
- **Course Review and Disaster Simulation:** Participants review and practice the skills they have learned during the previous six sessions in a disaster activity.

At the end of the training sessions, participants will receive a disaster response kit containing safety equipment (gloves, goggles, mask, etc.) and disaster supplies (bandages and dressings, etc.) for future volunteer opportunities.

### **Training Materials:**

#### **FEMA IS-317: Introduction to CERT (online)**

“Introduction to Community Emergency Response Teams,” IS-317, is an independent study course that serves as an introduction to CERT for those wanting to complete training or as a refresher for current team members. It takes between six and eight hours to complete the course. Those who successfully finish it will receive a certificate of completion. It has six modules with topics that include:

- Introduction to CERT
- Fire Safety
- Hazardous Material and Terrorist Incidents
- Disaster Medical Operations
- Search
- Rescue

IS-317 can be taken by anyone interested in CERT. However, to become a CERT volunteer, one must complete the classroom training offered by a local government agency, such as the emergency management agency, fire department, or police department. Contact the Willmar Police Department to learn about the local education and training opportunities available to you. Let this person know about your interest in taking CERT training and request an application.

Related Link: <https://www.ready.gov/community-emergency-response-team>

CERT training is typically offered in the spring and fall of each year. Applications may be submitted at any time and you will be notified of upcoming classes. If you have any questions, feel free to contact:

1. Sergeant Chad Nelson at [cnelson@willmarmn.gov](mailto:cnelson@willmarmn.gov) or 320-235-3100 ext. 3107
2. Sergeant Chad Oakleaf at [coakleaf@willmarmn.gov](mailto:coakleaf@willmarmn.gov) or 320-235-3100 ext. 3105
3. Sergeant Craig Lange at [clange@willmarmn.gov](mailto:clange@willmarmn.gov) or 320-235-3100 ext. 3106