

## Alexandria CERT Activities

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**Teen CERT.** Kevin Coleman distributed badges to the Fall 2023 graduates. He has run a couple of notification exercises through Everbridge and is tracking the response rate.

The Spring 2024 program will be held at ACPS on Wednesday afternoons February 21 – May 1 with Sunday afternoon field trips on March 10 at the EOC, April 14 at Station 210, and April 21 at APD headquarters. In all there will be 11 sessions, up from the 9 held in Fall 2023.

The course content is being significantly overhauled based on lessons learned from the fall. The units will be presented in a different order, with more activities, discussions, and videos.

Kevin Coleman updated the Teen CERT flyer and the CERT web page, and registration went live on January 16. On January 11 we met with RPCA's Teen Focus Group and will attend that again on February 8. On January 31, a Q&A session for interested teens and their parents will be held virtually. Posters and flyers have been distributed to most rec centers and libraries, plus to ACHS and the private high schools. Registration for Teen CERT closes on February 14.

A summer camp format for Teen CERT has been proposed to RPCA.

**CERT Basic Training.** The Spring course is scheduled for Tuesday evenings March 5 – April 16. Registration opened on January 15, with notifications sent to 27 people who expressed interest or who were unable to attend the Fall 2023 course. The number of in-person sessions have been increased to five to provide more hands-on practice, with only two sessions via Zoom. The course content is being tweaked, borrowing some activities from the Teen CERT materials.

The Standard Operating Procedure for CERT Basic is being revised.

**CERT Basic Exercises.** The final exercises need to be revamped based on feedback. The Mass Casualty Incident will have three sections, to increase the opportunities for people to assume leadership positions. Good suggestions were also made regarding the use of scripts and exercise logistical supplies. The final exercises will take place jointly for the adult and teen classes on Saturday, May 4 at Station 210.

**CERT Planning.** The core CERT instructional team met on December 13 to discuss plans and priorities for 2024. Beyond CERT Basic Training and Teen CERT, they developed a list of different trainings and meetings, some combined with social activities. While we continue to receive occasional requests from the public for trainings on subjects such as Active Bystander Until Help Arrives and CPR/AED, we are not encouraging these due to the limits on volunteer instructors and the demands of teaching both CERT Basic and Teen CERT.

**Volunteer Management System.** We have been investigating D4H and Volgistics as options for a hosted platform to manage CERT volunteer records.

**CERT Handbook and Policies.** New drafts of the proposed CERT Handbook and Policies were sent to Kevin Coleman for review and approval.

**SitRep Webinar.** Steve Johnson and Mark Lim held a webinar on January 15 on how to fill out Situation Reports for serious winter weather or flooding events. The webinar also explained the processes surrounding SitReps and other ways of reporting issues to the City. If the Coordinator and OEM agree that conditions warrant a SitRep activation, Steve and Mark set up a google form to report and collect data, and the Coordinator crafts an email with the link to the google form to send to CERT volunteers and setting the operational period for reporting. The raw data and an interactive map are sent periodically to OEM; OEM has no real-time visibility into the data. At the end of the operational period, personal information is removed from the raw data and the resulting spreadsheet and a non-interactive version of the map are sent to those who submitted reports. Laurel Brase, Laurel Hester, Wendy Joseph, Eric Letzgus, Jeffrey Scott, and Henry Yu attended the webinar. Coincidentally, January 15's weather was snowy and slippery.

**APD Rescue Task Force Exercise.** APD invited CERTs to be role players in their active shooter response training for new police recruits on January 16. Participants were Doyle Cockram, Steve Johnson, Shelley Spacek-Miller, Leonard Taylor, and Marjorie Windelberg from Alexandria, as were Frank Mirack and James Senecal from Arlington CERT. MRC role players were Melissa Edmonson, Michael Kutner, Donna Pickett, Kathy Stenzel, and Marco van Doeveren.

**REVIVE! Opioid Lay Rescuer Training.** MRC has invited CERT to attend the February 9 training. It will be at the Health Department, 11 am – 12:30 pm.

**CERT Meeting February 24.** Planning is underway for a CERT meeting at Fire Station 210 on February 24. Catherine Weinraub, the historian for Friendship Firehouse has been invited to do a presentation. Following this, CERT volunteer Chris Smith will lead an interactive session on “What’s In Your Bag?” to exchange ideas on supplies and equipment CERTs can add to their basic CERT gear.

**Volunteer Reception Center / Donations Management.** Doyle Cockram and Marjorie Windelberg attended the December 20 presentation on Donations Management. The January meeting was postponed until January 24.

**Local Emergency Planning Committee.** Marjorie Windelberg attended the December 12 LEPC meeting and was given the opportunity to speak about what CERT is and does. The 1986 Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act, part of the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act, required the creation of LEPCs for oversight of planning efforts for toxic chemicals.

**CERT Newsletter.** The January – March issue addressed crime prevention and reporting emergencies and non-emergencies. All back issues of the newsletter are in the Public folder on the Alexandria CERT document portal:

<https://docs.alexandriavacert.org/index.php/s/bSFjMMfSAeddmSw>.

# Regional Activities

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**NCR CERT Consortium.** Note: The majority of NCR CERT Consortium participants are CERT volunteer leaders; the government agencies sponsoring local CERTs are not on the calls.

The December 14 meeting was a recap of the December 10 meeting with the National CERT Association, followed by updates from each jurisdiction. The Consortium did not meet in January. The next meeting is February 8.

**National CERT Association Conference.** The National CERT Association met with members of the Consortium on December 10. NCA is planning to hold its conference at the DC Convention Center. Dates are still being worked out, as the original August dates conflicted with events for Florida CERTs. Options under consideration are:

- 2.5-day main conference preceded by up to 3 days of pre-conference
- 4.5-day total conference, offering training and presentations concurrently with a half day exercise on the last day
- 5.5-day total conference, offering training and presentations concurrently with a half day exercise on the last day

Presentations are of general interest on a wide variety of emergency preparedness and management topics. Non-CERT personnel that will be invited to attend include local Fire / EMS / Law Enforcement, local OEMs; MRC; radio clubs; and AmeriCorps. Training topics are more advanced. Some are CERT-focused, such as CERT Train-the-Trainer and CERT Program Manager, which require endorsement from the attendee's jurisdictional authority. Some trainings will be offered by TEEEX (Texas A&M Engineering Extension); requested topics include Pediatric Disaster Management and Wide Area Search. FEMA Administrator Deana Criswell will be the keynote speaker.

NCA volunteers will also meet with FEMA personnel as well as engage in lobbying in Congress on behalf of CERT programs nationally.

The conference planning committee may begin meeting in January; Frances Whalen of DC CERT is co-char. Subcommittees are likely to include overall agenda, trainings, presentation breakouts, marketing, registration, networking activities, local attractions, and budget and fundraising.

The target attendance is 400 people minimum, with up to 750 people as a high-end number. The number of paid attendees drives the budget and what can and cannot be done. The estimate is that the registration fee would be about \$400 for 400 attendees at a 2.5-day conference, with higher amounts for the longer durations. The NCA is also working to secure blocks of rooms at nearby hotels for out of region attendees, with a target cost of about \$130 per night (plus taxes and fees).

DC HSEMA has committed \$30,000 in UASI funds for the conference; some of these funds will support "scholarships" for volunteers who work during the conference, printing program books, and coffee breaks. The DC Mayor's office is expected to provide staff to work on conference operations as well.