TETON COUNTY, WY

CERT

COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM

CERT Policy Manual

"The Greatest Good for the Greatest Number"

Contents

APPROVAL & IMPLEMENTATION

The Teton County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Policy Manual has been adopted for the purpose of guiding the Teton County, WY Community Emergency Response Team's efforts toward building and sustaining a more disaster-resilient community. Teton County Emergency Management, as the sponsoring organization for Teton County CERT and utilizing input from CERT membership and local emergency services, reserves the right to alter, amend, or revoke these policies at any time for any reason.

This version dated **November 15, 2023**, supersedes any and all previous editions.

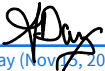**Approval and Adoption**

Rich Ochs, Coordinator Teton County Emergency Management	11/15/23 Date
Anna Day (Nov 15, 2023 14:26 MST) Anna Day, Program Specialist Teton County Emergency Management	11/15/2023 Date

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RECORD OF CHANGES

The table below provides an ongoing list of changes or revisions to this policy document. Any new changes, additions, or modifications to the CERT Policy Manual are to be added to the table below at the time of revision.

Change Number: YR-XXX	Date of Change: MM/YYYY	Change Summary/Sections Affected	Position Name/Initials
23-001	09/2023	Inserted a Record of Changes page	CERT PM
23-002	09/2023	Renamed "CERT Organization" section to "Direction & Control" and added new introductory language to that section	CERT PM
23-003	09/2023	Moved "Funding" into its own section	CERT PM
23-004	09/2023	Added 2 sentences to the Purpose Statement	CERT PM
23-005	09/2023	Changed dates on cover page and in "Approval & Implementation" section to match revision date	CERT PM
23-006	09/2023	Added the CERT Leadership Team (function and definition) to the "Leadership" sub-section p. 6	CERT PM
23-007	09/2023	Added "Duty to Act" sub-section under "CERT Activation"	CERT PM
23-008	09/2023	Added "Equipment" section	CERT PM
23-009	09/2023	Added "Reporting Injuries & Accidents" section	CERT PM
23-010	09/2023	Made the SOP regarding drugs and alcohol into its own "Drugs & Alcohol" section	CERT PM
23-011	09/2023	Added language about submitting background check authorization and passing background check to "Basic Training" section	CERT PM
23-012	09/2023	Added information about attendance credit for auditing Basic Training in "Meetings & Continuing Education" section	CERT PM
23-013	09/2023	Added "Uniforms & Clothing" Section	CERT PM
23-014	09/2023	Added "Weapons" Section	CERT PM
23-015	09/2023	Added a personal & team safety SOP	CERT PM
23-016	11/2023	Added an additional level of membership (Field Qualified) and modified Active Membership requirements	CERT PM

PURPOSE

The CERT Policy Manual is a guideline and general statement of Teton County CERT's present policies on training, membership requirements, activation procedures, and standard operating procedures (SOPs). These policies and procedures are intended to govern activities before, during and after emergencies. The policy is also intended to provide guidance to local emergency response agencies when interfacing with CERT. The CERT Policy Manual is not intended to be all-inclusive.

PROGRAM GOAL

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) in Teton County works at the grassroots level to build and sustain a more disaster-resilient community.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

1. Empower volunteers to become better prepared for emergencies and disasters at the individual and family level.
2. Give participants the knowledge and confidence to become advocates for preparedness in their neighborhoods, workplaces, and social communities.
3. Provide basic disaster response skills training for members so that, in the event of a catastrophic disaster, they can help themselves, others nearby, and the larger community until emergency services arrive.

BACKGROUND

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) concept was developed in the mid-1980s, in the aftermath of several large earthquakes that overwhelmed professional response capabilities. Emergency response agencies began to realize that civilians are likely to be left on their own during the early stages of a catastrophic disaster and should be better trained to:

1. Help themselves and their families;
2. Help their neighbors, coworkers, or others nearby;
3. Help the larger community.

The Los Angeles City Fire Department piloted the first CERT program in 1986 for earthquake response. Other jurisdictions soon adopted their model and expanded it to other types of disasters. CERT became a national program in 1993 and is currently housed within the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Individual and Community Preparedness Division. Now, Community Emergency Response

Teams across the nation have the same goal: to do the greatest good for the greatest number in the shortest amount of time.

Teton County CERT was started in 2006 and has trained hundreds of volunteers in emergency preparedness and basic disaster response skills.

The Teton County CERT program provides continuing education, skills practice, and opportunities for members to deploy to planned events and real-world emergencies in the county.

In Teton County, Wyoming, CERT members have:

- Staffed the Support Bus to provide food, shelter, and support for first responders during structure fires, search and rescue missions, and wildfires
- Provided fire extinguisher training to the public
- Staffed information booths during wildfire evacuations
- Assisted with sandbagging and damage assessments during flooding incidents
- Acted as perimeter security and safety lookouts during a landslide incident
- Assisted the American Red Cross with shelter and feeding operations
- Worked in the Teton County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during major incidents
- Participated in mass casualty incident exercises and other drills with various agencies
- And more!

DIRECTION & CONTROL

The CERT Leadership Team will set all policies and operational procedures. Policy direction of this CERT is influenced by the following documents:

1. All applicable State and County laws with respect to emergency or disaster response and related liability protection,
2. The Teton County/Town of Jackson Emergency Operations Plan,
3. Policies and procedures of the Teton County, Wyoming Emergency Management Agency

Sponsoring Organization
The Teton County CERT program is sponsored by Teton County Emergency Management (TCEM), which is a division of Jackson Hole Fire/EMS.

Leadership
CERT Program Coordinator
The Teton County Emergency Management Coordinator acts as the CERT Coordinator and oversees the program at the highest level.

CERT Program Manager

The Teton County Emergency Management Program Specialist acts as the CERT Program Manager and is the primary point of contact for all CERT members. The CERT Program Manager is responsible for facilitating CERT Basic Trainings, providing continuing education opportunities for active CERT members, hosting CERT membership meetings, addressing concerns from the membership, budgeting for the CERT organization, volunteer management, and other administrative duties.

CERT Team Leaders

In addition, CERT Team Leaders may be drawn from the CERT membership to assist the CERT Program Manager with some of the above-mentioned duties.

CERT Leadership Team

The CERT Leadership Team sets all policies and operational procedures for this CERT and makes decisions regarding the program at a strategic level. The Leadership Team is comprised of the CERT Coordinator, the CERT Program Manager, and any CERT Team Leaders selected to the Leadership Team by the Coordinator or Program Manager.

FUNDING

CERT in Teton County is funded through TCEM's CERT budget, which is provided by the Teton County and Town of Jackson Government. This funding pays for CERT kits, CERT retention items, CERT meetings and trainings, CERT trailer maintenance, and CERT equipment. So long as the CERT program is sufficiently funded through the TCEM budget, CERT Basic Training and program membership will be free to the public.

Local emergency service agencies such as Jackson Hole Fire/EMS, Jackson Police Department, the American Red Cross, and others donate the time of their personnel as subject matter experts and instructors for the CERT program.

BASIC TRAINING

CERT Basic Training gives participants the knowledge and skills to help themselves and to help others in the event of a catastrophic disaster or a smaller-scale emergency in their neighborhood or community. The training involves a mix of classroom lecture/discussion and hands-on activities. Topics covered include basic first aid, disaster psychology, fire safety and utility controls, light urban search and rescue operations, and more. Teton County residents and workers will be given priority for admission to Basic Training, but consideration will be given to students from outside the County if space allows.

Frequency

Teton County Emergency Management intends to hold a CERT Basic Training annually, or more frequently if resources allow and there is enough interest in the community.

Requirements

Applicants must:

- Be 18 years of age or older,
- Fill out an application form,
- Sign and submit a *Hold Harmless/Permission Request* form,
- Sign and submit a Teton County *Pre-Employment Consent for Background Check Authorization Form*.

It should be noted that failing the background check is grounds for removal from Basic Training and ineligibility for the Teton County CERT program.

Students who complete Basic Training are eligible, but not required, to join Teton County CERT.

MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

Prerequisites

To be considered for membership in Teton County CERT, individuals must:

1. Be at least 18 years of age or older, AND
2. Successfully complete CERT Basic Training in Teton County, OR provide proof to the Program Manager of having completed Basic Training elsewhere, AND
3. Pass a Teton County background check

Criminal offenses do not necessarily prevent Teton County CERT membership, however certain offenses may be cause for review. Serious felonies, battery, sex offender registration, and habitual abuse of drugs and/or alcohol are examples of criminal offenses that may prevent one from becoming or remaining a Teton County CERT Member.

Field Qualified

To maintain "Field Qualified" status, members must:

1. Attend at least two trainings or membership meetings per calendar year, AND
2. Update their contact information with the Program Manager whenever it changes.

Field Qualified Members will receive communications and notifications regarding trainings, meetings, exercises, events, and incident responses. Field Qualified Members are eligible to deploy with Teton County CERT to planned or unplanned events (see CERT Activation).

Active Members

To maintain "Active" status, members must:

1. Remain in communication with the Program Manager at least once per year to indicate their interest, AND

2. Update their contact information with the Program Manager whenever it changes.

Active Members will receive communications and notifications regarding trainings and meetings. Active Members are NOT eligible to deploy with Teton County CERT to planned or unplanned events. See above section on requirements for being Field Qualified.

Inactive Members

Members who do not wish or are unable to meet the requirements for Active Membership will be transitioned to "Inactive" status. Inactive Members will not receive any program communications or notifications and are not eligible to deploy with Teton County CERT to planned or unplanned events. An Inactive Member may request in writing to be reinstated. Their reinstatement will be at the discretion of the Program Manager or Program Coordinator.

MEETINGS & CONTINUING EDUCATION

The CERT Program Manager will offer continuing education opportunities to Active Members on a regular basis. Training topics may include those covered in CERT Basic Training as well as other topics intended to help members become more prepared and better able to respond to disasters and emergencies. Suggestions for training topics are welcome from CERT membership, and the Program Manager will do their best to accommodate those requests.

CERT membership meetings will be held when necessary and will cover topics such as policies and procedures, modifications to this manual, After Action Reports and lessons learned from recent activations, etc. The CERT Program Manager is also responsible for setting up membership meetings.

Trainings and meetings will be announced via email to Active Members, and an RSVP will be requested for planning purposes. Every training and meeting will feature an attendance sheet where members must sign in. Failure to sign in may result in inaccuracies in the member's training record.

Active team members are invited to audit the annual CERT Basic Training course to refresh their skills. One unit of Basic Training is equal to one attendance credit towards the requirement for Active Members.

EQUIPMENT

Students who successfully complete CERT Basic Training through TCEM are issued a CERT response kit which becomes their personal property. Volunteers are encouraged to supplement their equipment ensemble with items they feel are useful and appropriate. Equipment that is determined to be outside the scope-of-practice of CERT (e.g. firearms, chain saws, body armor and other tactical gear) are not authorized for inclusion in the volunteer's equipment bag and may not be labeled with the CERT logo or name. Prohibited equipment is forbidden for use during all CERT-sanctioned events and activations.

CERT ACTIVATION

There are two ways in which CERT members may activate: Formal Activation and Situational Activation. Regardless of the type of activation, CERT members should activate only if they feel safe and capable of doing so. Prior to any activation, CERT members should make certain that their family and friends are taken care of.

Formal Activation

The CERT Coordinator, Program Manager, or Team Leader will issue a notification to Active Members or to a subset of the Active Membership if the activation is specialized. This notification may come in the form of a phone call, email, text message, or other similar format. The notification message will include information on the nature of the incident, the meeting place, the meeting time, and to whom the CERT member must report upon arrival.

> *Any use or distribution of the official CERT contact list outside of the CERT organization will be viewed as a serious breach of ethics, and may be grounds for expulsion from Teton County CERT.*

It should be noted that Workers Compensation coverage is ONLY for Active Members and ONLY during Formal Activations (see Protections for more information on Workers Compensation).

Situational Activation

Certain situations may arise in which a Formal Activation is not possible or is not practical. Under these situations, CERT members, or any individual, may offer assistance if they feel that their training renders them capable to do so in a safe manner. In the event of a Situational Activation, ***CERT members should always attempt to call 911 and notify emergency services of the situation before rendering aid***.

Examples of events that could prompt a Situational Activation are:

a. <u>Large Catastrophic Event</u> in CERT member's vicinity. An example is a large earthquake that occurs while a CERT member is at work. Skills acquired through CERT trainings could be of great use in organizing coworkers and starting a safe disaster response.

   Large Catastrophic Events often compromise lines of communication, damage transportation infrastructure, and overwhelm emergency services, thus making Situational Activation necessary. After assisting those in their immediate vicinity, CERT members should head to the nearest Teton County Fire Station. The Fire Stations are designated rally points where CERT members can tie in with emergency responders and understand the need for further assistance. CERT members should be familiar with the nearest fire stations to their work to their home.

b. <u>Emergency Situation</u> in CERT member's vicinity. An example is a traffic accident that the member witnesses while commuting home from work. If emergency services are not already at the scene, skills acquired through CERT trainings may be of value in providing medical or emotional aid to those involved until professional responders arrive. Situational Activation

would be used in this circumstance if there is an immediate threat to life and/or property and the CERT member is in the immediate area.

Prohibitions on "Self-Dispatching"

Under no circumstances are CERT members to "self-dispatch" to an event. This means that CERT members are not to listen to emergency scanners or follow emergency vehicles in order to offer assistance to emergency services at an incident. A situation that would <u>not</u> warrant CERT member activation is, for instance, a CERT member is in Moran and hears on the radio that there was a tornado at Hoback Junction, so they drive down to Hoback Junction to assist. If CERT assistance is needed in an area outside of a member's immediate vicinity, they will receive a Formal Activation notification (provided they are an Active Member).

Duty to Act

As a volunteer, no CERT member has a legal duty to act and is not required to respond to incidents in their immediate area ([Situational Activation](#)) nor to calls for team activation ([Formal Activation](#)). However, once activated, CERT members must follow safe and effective practices at all times and adhere to the Standard Operating Procedures below. Volunteers who "[self-dispatch](#)", act outside their training or responsibility, or otherwise violate policies or codes of conduct are subject to termination.

CERT DEMOBILIZATION

CERT members will always follow the direction of on-scene emergency response personnel. If emergency response personnel no longer require CERT assistance at the scene and request CERT member(s) to demobilize, the member(s) will notify their direct supervisor and leave the scene in a safe manner.

When possible, following a Formal Activation, a debriefing should be held and an After Action Report generated. The CERT Coordinator, Program Manager, Team Leader, or next most experienced CERT member should lead the debriefing and generate the Report. The debriefing is intended to gather feedback from all CERT members who responded in order to generate a list of things that went well and items for improvement. The After Action Report includes the information gathered during the debriefing and should also include:

1. First and last names of all CERT members involved
2. Nature of activation (type of incident, e.g. traffic accident, flood, house fire, etc.)
3. Times/dates of activation and demobilization
4. Actions taken by CERT members while activated
5. Any injuries incurred by CERT members during activation

Reports should be submitted to the CERT Program Manager by email to em@tetoncountywy.gov with the subject line "CERT After Action Report". Alternatively, reports may be sent via USPS to Teton

County Emergency Management, PO Box 4458, Jackson, WY 83001, or delivered to the Emergency Operations Center at 3240 S Adams Canyon Dr., Jackson, WY 83001.

REPORTING INJURIES & ACCIDENTS

Any activated CERT member suffering or witnessing an accident or injury shall immediately report it to the Incident Commander through the ICS chain of command, or in the absence of an ICS structure, to a member of the CERT Leadership Team. If a CERT volunteer sustains an injury or illness during a sanctioned CERT activity, that volunteer must report it regardless of the severity. The affected volunteer must also sign and submit all appropriate forms to the Teton County Human Resources Department within seventy-two hours after the injury or illness has occurred. Failure to submit timely reports may delay or endanger applicable indemnity and/or medical benefits to individuals.

UNIFORMS & CLOTHING

Teton CERT members will wear proper clothing and personal protective equipment (PPE) during all CERT-sanctioned activities including trainings, meetings, exercises, and activations. In general, a CERT-branded or plain long or short sleeve shirt appropriate for current weather conditions, long pants, and closed-toe shoes or boots are acceptable and necessary to a promote a positive, professional perception of the organization and its personnel. The high-visibility 5-point breakaway safety vest provided in CERT response kits will be worn at all times during activations and as appropriate for other CERT events. Other PPE needs are situation-dependent and may include a CERT hard hat, eye protection, ear protection, work gloves, work boots, particulate dust mask, and more. Any variations for special circumstances will be communicated to Team members by a member of the CERT Leadership Team.

WEAPONS

Teton CERT members may not carry any weapon while functioning in any capacity as a CERT member, even if legally authorized to do so.

DRUGS & ALCOHOL

Teton CERT members are not to use alcohol or drugs at CERT meeting, trainings, or activations. CERT members should not attend meetings/trainings or respond to activation notifications if they are under the influence of alcohol or drugs that can alter their judgment or ability to work in a rescue capacity. If a volunteer has a question about their capacity to respond, they should err on the side of caution and not respond until they have recovered.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

CERT Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for preparedness and response activities are covered in CERT Basic Training and are included in FEMA's [CERT Basic Training Participant Manual](#). A summary of these procedures is included in the CERT Field Operating Guide. Both the Participant Manual and the Field Operating Guide are issued to every student in Teton County's CERT Basic Training course. Contact the CERT Program Manager for more information on obtaining new copies of either document.

Following are some of the most important National CERT SOPs and additional local CERT SOPs:

- **In a disaster, CERT members are instructed to take care of themselves and their families before helping others.**

- **CERT members are more likely to be able to assist their neighborhoods and the larger community when disaster strikes if they have taken proactive preparedness measures**.
  CERT members should have a family disaster plan, practice the plan with drills, assemble supplies in multiple locations, reduce the impact of hazards through mitigation, and more.

- **CERT members are not trained to perform all of the functions to respond to the same degree as professional responders in an emergency or disaster situation.**
  CERT members learn basic skills that are important to know in a disaster when emergency services personnel are not immediately available.

- **Personal and team safety is the first priority in any CERT activity.**
  Team members will wear all personal protective equipment appropriate for the situation. Members will use the buddy system and maintain accountability. Members will use the CERT on-scene size-up process to evaluate the safety of the environment and proposed operations before taking action. Members will warn other volunteers and members of the public if a scene is unsafe.

- **CERT members are instructed not to self-dispatch to an incident**.
  For further explanation, see [CERT Activation](#).

- **If CERT members are working on an incident alongside emergency services personnel, CERT members will follow the instructions of emergency services personnel and work within the Incident Command System (ICS).**
  If a CERT member believes that they cannot safely complete a task assigned to them by an emergency responder, they should explain this to the emergency responder and not complete the task. If CERT members are told that their assistance is no longer needed by emergency services, they will leave the scene.

- **CERT first aid training covers basic life saving measures including controlling bleeding, airway, circulation, and shock.**
  Some basic exposure, burn, and splinting techniques are also covered. CPR/AED use is not covered, nor are more advanced first aid measures.

- **CERT members learn basic principles of psychological first aid which better equip them to deal with the psychological effects of trauma in themselves and in others.**
  CERT members should be alert to signs of disaster trauma in themselves. They should take actions before, during, and after an incident to help manage the emotional impact of disaster response work. They should work together and look out for one another.

- **CERT fire suppression training is limited to fires no larger than a small trash can.**
  CERT members are trained on how to size up a scene to determine if fire extinguisher use is appropriate, and subsequently on how to use a fire extinguisher.

- **CERT members are not to enter structures that are considered heavily damaged.**
  Signs of heavy damage include but are not limited to partial or total building collapse, tilting, obvious structural instability, heavy smoke or fire, rising or running water, and gas leaks or hazardous materials inside.

- **CERT members are not equipped or trained to respond to terrorist incidents.**
  CERT members do learn eight signs of terrorism and are expected to contact local law enforcement if they observe suspicious activity.

PROTECTIONS

Active CERT members have certain protections as volunteers in the State of Wyoming.

Good Samaritan Law
According to Wyoming state statute §1-1-120:

> **1-1-120. Persons rendering emergency assistance exempt from civil liability.**
>
> (a) Any person licensed as a physician and surgeon under the laws of the state of Wyoming, or any other person, who in good faith renders emergency care or assistance without compensation at the place of an emergency or accident, is not liable for any civil damages for acts or omissions in good faith.

This does not mean that CERT members cannot be sued; it only means that CERT members will not have to pay for civil damages if they are found to have acted in good faith. The best way to demonstrate "good faith" is to:

1. Always act within your scope of training;
2. Follow the Standard Operating Procedures covered in CERT Basic Training and contained in FEMA's CERT Basic Training Manual;
3. Follow the policies outlined in this document.

Wyoming Workers Compensation Act

CERT members are also covered by the Wyoming Workers Compensation Act under Wyoming State Statute §27-14-101 et seq. CERT members are considered volunteer emergency management agency personnel under Wyoming state statute §27-14-108 (e) (viii). Teton County Emergency Management is responsible for paying the premiums for CERT member Workers Compensation insurance. Active CERT members who attend sanctioned CERT activities will be asked to sign in on an attendance sheet and to give their social security number. Teton County's payroll clerk uses the social security numbers to pay the Workers Compensation premium for each volunteer to the state of Wyoming.

THE FUTURE OF CERT

The future of the CERT program in Teton County is dependent upon three things:

1. Funding,
2. Support from local emergency response agencies,
3. Participation of CERT members.

Funding is currently provided by Teton County Government and the Town of Jackson through the Emergency Management budget.

Local emergency services realize the importance of CERT and do their best to support this program by providing personnel and equipment/materials for training, among other things. The success of the CERT program partially depends on their continued desire and ability to support the program.

Most importantly, the future of the CERT program is dependent upon the involvement and dedication of the CERT membership. Teton County Emergency Management staff will do their best to sustain and improve the CERT program as much as they are able. However, any major change must be initiated and sustained by the membership. If the CERT program sustains a solid base of Active Members who prioritize CERT trainings/meetings/activations and take leadership roles within the organization, it has potential to expand and grow into whatever the membership desires. On the other hand, if members do not commit their time and effort to the program, it will diminish proportionally.