

**Webster County  
Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)**

A program of the Webster County Citizen Corps Council

Standard Operating Guidelines

**DRAFT**

Revision 2.3  
5/11/09

## Table of Contents

Mission	3
Purpose	3
Situation and Assumptions	3
Membership	
Eligibility	4
Levels of Participation	4
Requirements	4
Expectations	5
Quarterly Meetings	5
Code of Conduct	6
Dismissal	6
Concept of Operations	
Command and Control	7
Activation of CERT	
Self-Activation	7
County Activation	8
Regional Activation	8
State and Federal Activation	9
Deactivation	9
Non-emergency Activation	9
Communication	
Emergency Communication	9
Non-emergency Communication	10
Equipment	10
Approval	10
Acknowledgement Form	11

## **MISSION**

To assist families, neighborhoods and communities in emergency preparedness, response and recovery during times of peace and times of disaster as a supplement to traditional first responders.

## **PURPOSE**

The CERT Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG) outline procedures for the organization, activation, notification, coordination, capabilities and responsibilities of the Webster County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).

## **SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS**

Emergencies can happen at any time with or without notice. In an emergency, traditional first responders may be unable to immediately respond to everyone in need due to an interruption in communication, blocked or damaged roads, or overwhelmed first responder services.

Because Webster County is largely rural, many traditional first responders are volunteer, may work outside the county and may be unable to quickly respond to an emergency.

Webster County recognizes the need for an organized and trained group of CERT volunteers who will respond to an emergency by first caring for their family, then their neighborhood, then their community until traditional first responders arrive.

CERT members are not emergency services personnel as defined by state law and as such are **not** exempt from federal, state and local laws when responding to emergencies. CERT members must use due care and diligence when responding to emergencies or reporting as directed.

The Webster County CERT program operates under the direction of the Webster County Citizen Corps Council, with funding from the Region D Regional Homeland Security Oversight Committee through the Webster County Commission.

The Webster County CERT program works in cooperation with the Webster County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and the Webster County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC).

CERT members will be activated by the Webster County CERT Trainer at the request of the Webster County Office of Emergency Management.

CERT members may be utilized for various assignments, including countywide, regional, statewide or national emergencies or events.

## MEMBERSHIP

### Eligibility

Membership in the Webster County CERT program is open to Webster County residents 18 and older.

Membership in the CERT Cadet program is open to Webster County residents 16 and 17 years old.

CERT does not discriminate against anyone because of race, color, religion, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental disability, socioeconomic status or veteran status.

### Levels of Participation

Webster County residents may participate in the CERT program at four different levels.

LEVEL	TYPE	EQUIPMENT	REQUIREMENTS
Awareness	Personal Use	Certificate	20-hour Basic Course
Level 1	Neighborhood Responder	Certificate ID Badge Backpack	Background check 20-hour Basic Course
Level 2	Community Responder	Certificate ID Badge Backpack	Background check 20-hour Basic Course 15 hours participation 16 hours training (1/2 can be online)
Level 3	Team Leader	Certificate ID Badge Backpack	Background check 20-hour Basic Course 15 hours participation 16 hours training (1/2 can be online) NIMS 100 FEMA Volunteer Management

Training must be in courses approved by the CERT trainer. Members should submit training requests to the CERT trainer in advance of taking a course to ensure credit will apply.

Participation may include attendance at quarterly meetings, assisting the CERT trainer with projects, acting as role players in the drill module for other classes, doing community service approved by the CERT Trainer, or other opportunities as approved in advance by the CERT trainer.

Training certificates and participation hours should be turned in to the CERT Trainer at least quarterly.

### Requirements

In order to become an active CERT member, residents must be at least 18 years old and—

- successfully complete a criminal background check through the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services' Family Safety Registry, and

- complete required paperwork, and
- complete the required 20-hour Basic CERT course in Webster County, or
- complete the required Basic CERT Course elsewhere and attended a Webster County CERT orientation session.

In order to become an active CERT Cadet member, residents must be 16 or 17 years old and—

- be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian, and
- successfully pass a background check through the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services' Family Safety Registry, and
- complete required paperwork, and
- complete the required 20-hour Basic CERT Course in Webster County, or
- complete the required Basic CERT Course elsewhere and attend a Webster County CERT orientation session,

CERT members agree to abide by the Code of Conduct outlined in this SOG. Continuing membership in the Webster County CERT program will be contingent upon the member adhering to the Code of Conduct, fulfilling annual training requirements and completing required annual volunteer participation hours.

### **Expectations**

CERT members are expected to:

- Prepare their homes and families for emergencies by developing a family emergency plan and assembling an emergency supplies kit.
- Work with their employers, children's schools, civic groups and faith-based organizations to prepare for emergencies.
- Encourage community members to prepare for emergencies.
- Maintain response equipment.
- Attend quarterly CERT meetings.
- Maintain and improve their skills through trainings, drills and practice.
- Maintain situational awareness and make appropriate plans to respond if necessary.
- Always keep their own safety and the safety of their CERT team the top priority.
- Operate only within their scope of work and level of training.
- Maintain a code of conduct that accurately represents the mission and standards of the CERT program.
- Keep open lines of communication with the Webster County CERT Trainer.
- Provide the CERT Trainer with current contact information.
- Volunteer to serve their community as able in non-emergency times.

### **Quarterly Meetings**

The Webster County CERT Trainer will facilitate quarterly meetings for CERT members. Content will include new information, regional updates, training, skills refreshers and brainstorming. Attendance at quarterly meetings will apply toward training or participation requirements to maintain CERT Levels 2 and 3. CERT members are expected to attend quarterly meetings in order to

improve skills and strengthen working relationships with other team members. Meetings will be open to the public.

### **Code of Conduct**

CERT members are expected to conduct themselves at all times in a manner consistent with the mission and values of the CERT program. Violation of the following standards constitutes cause for dismissal from the CERT program.

- CERT members agree to treat all members of the public with equal care and compassion.
- CERT members agree to not accept, either directly or indirectly, any personal gift, gratuity or anything of value from the public they serve. Members should refer any individual or agency wishing to make a donation to the CERT Trainer for follow up.
- CERT members agree to not offer medical advice beyond their level of training.
- CERT members agree to not accept an activation while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance.
- CERT members agree to not consume alcohol or use a controlled substance while activated.
- CERT members agree to be neat and clean and dressed appropriately for the nature of their assignments.
- CERT members agree to wear their CERT ID badge at all times when activated.
- CERT members agree to refrain from sexual harassment of teammates or members of the public.
- CERT members agree to obey all local, state and federal laws while activated.

### **Dismissal**

CERT members may be dismissed from the program for the following reasons:

- failure to maintain training and participation hours,
- violating the code of conduct,
- insubordination,
- operating outside their level of training,
- neglect of duty,
- intentionally operating in direct opposition to the standard operating guidelines,
- acting with reckless abandon or malicious intent, or
- conviction of a felony or a crime against a person.

A dismissal hearing will be conducted by the Webster County Citizen Corps Council at the request of the Webster County CERT Trainer. The member in question will be permitted to speak at the hearing. The hearing will be closed to the public. Information discussed at the hearing will remain confidential and all decisions of the Council will be final. Upon dismissal, the member must return their CERT ID badge, return all equipment and supplies that are property of the CERT program and replace any missing or damaged equipment or provide the program fair financial compensation for such items.

Members may voluntarily withdraw from the program at any time by—

- notifying the CERT Trainer in writing, and
- returning to her their CERT ID badge, and

- returning to her all equipment and supplies that are property of the CERT program, and
- replacing any missing or damaged equipment or providing fair financial compensation for such items.

## CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

### Command and Control

Webster County CERT will follow the command and control structure of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) which establishes an incident commander who oversees a planning chief, logistics chief, operations chief, financial chief, safety officer and public information officer. CERT will initially be requested by the Webster County Office of Emergency Management, and most often, CERT will operate under the operations branch.

CERT members will communicate initially with the Webster County CERT Trainer for instructions, status and activities. When traditional first responders arrive on scene, CERT members will take instructions from the designated on scene commander. When released by the on scene commander, CERT members will contact the Webster County CERT Trainer for reassignment.

The first CERT member to arrive on scene becomes the CERT Team Leader and is responsible for scene size up, planning, safety and assignments. When other CERT members arrive, the Team Leader may pass leadership over to another CERT member who is more qualified, and should always consider passing command on to CERT members who are more highly trained or experienced.

The Team Leader will be responsible for assuring the safety of all CERT members by verifying they have completed the Basic CERT training, have appropriate safety and other response equipment necessary, are physically capable of performing assigned tasks and are operating within their scope of training.

The Team Leader will set priorities and delegate assignments. Teams must have a minimum of two (2) members before activating, and will remain together until reassigned.

The Team Leader will be responsible for communication with the Webster County CERT Trainer and will keep the CERT Trainer informed of the team's on scene assignments and status. Team members will only communicate with the Team Leader, as outlined in the NIMS unity of command.

The Chain of Command during a disaster will be as follows:

- Emergency Management Director (or Assistant)
- CERT Trainer
- CERT Team Leader
- CERT members

## Activation

### Self-Activation

- CERT members may use their best judgment in self-activating in their immediate physical area immediately following an emergency event.
- When self-activating, CERT members should first notify the Webster County CERT Trainer.
- If self activating outside of Webster County, CERT members should notify the CERT Coordinator in the county in which they are activating, utilizing the regional CERT contact list, and should then notify the Webster County CERT Trainer of their location and self-activation.
- Frequent status reports should be provided to the CERT Coordinator in the county in which the member has self-activated.
- When traditional first responders arrive, the CERT member should report, then deactivate himself if no longer needed, and notify both the CERT Coordinator and the Webster County CERT Trainer of his deactivation status.
- Once the CERT member has safely returned to Webster County she should notify the CERT Trainer of her availability.
- When self-activating, CERT members should remember to prioritize their own safety first and then the safety of others.
- CERT members should not self deploy outside of their immediate physical location.

### County Activation

- At the request of the Webster County Office of Emergency Management, the Webster County CERT Trainer may activate CERT members in advance of, during or following an emergency in Webster County.
- Members will be activated by a phone call with instructions on where to go and what to do.
- Some emergencies may disrupt phone service, hindering communication. CERT members who do not receive an activation call should first call the CERT information line for instructions.
- Members who have completed their family and neighborhood care, have not received an activation call and are unable to get through to the information line should self-activate to their designated staging area and report to the Incident Commander.
- Members who are away from home during the emergency, have completed care in their immediate area, have not received an activation call and are unable to get through to the information line should self-activate to the nearest CERT staging area and report to the Incident Commander.

### Regional Activation

- The Webster County CERT Trainer may request CERT members activate in response to a regional emergency, or an emergency affecting another county in southwest Missouri's Region D.

- Webster CERT members may choose to accept or decline the request.
- Members who accept will be given instructions on what to do and where to go.
- Members will be responsible for their own expenses and travel.
- Members agree to follow the guidelines set forth in the jurisdiction to which they are traveling, in addition to continuing to follow the Webster County CERT Code of Conduct.
- Members agree to support the goals and objectives of the emergency response mission of the jurisdiction in which they are responding.

#### State and Federal Activation

- The Webster County CERT Trainer may issue a CERT activation at the request of the state or the federal government in order to respond to a state-wide or national emergency.
- CERT members who choose to accept the activation may—
  - become temporary state or federal employees,
  - be deployed for two (2) or more weeks, and
  - be sent to a staging area to receive additional training before being sent on an assignment.
- Members will need to take credit cards or cash to cover expenses for several days before being paid.
- Members will also agree to support the state or federal disaster response goals and objectives, and follow state or federal guidelines.
- Members might not operate as a CERT trained individual or on CERT teams while deployed.

#### Deactivation

- When CERT members are deactivated by the on-scene commander, they should report back to the CERT Trainer for reassignment.
- When CERT members are deactivated by the CERT Trainer, they should return to their respective staging areas to critique the response, inventory and replace equipment and receive follow up instructions.

#### Non-emergency Activation

- CERT members may be activated to assist with non-emergency situations such as crowd control at community events.
- During these activations, the command structure and operating guidelines outlined in this document will apply in order to ensure accountability and safety of CERT members and the public they serve.

### **Communication**

#### Emergency Communication

- CERT members will be activated by phone call from the Webster County CERT Trainer or her designee.
- Instructions will also be provided on the CERT information line.

- The Emergency Alert System (EAS) may also be utilized to communicate with CERT members.
- When phone service is disrupted, CERT members will receive direct communication at pre-designated staging areas.
- The CERT Trainer may also call for communication assistance from local Ham operators.

#### Non-emergency Communication

- Routine communication with CERT members will be conducted by telephone and email.
- Information may also be posted on the program's Web site at [www.WebsterCERT.org](http://www.WebsterCERT.org).

#### **Equipment**

CERT members who complete the Basic CERT training and agree to participate in the program at a minimum of Level 1 will be issued an equipment backpack for training and response. The backpacks and contents remain the property of the Webster County CERT program, are to be used only for CERT training and response, and must be returned to the Webster County CERT Trainer if the member voluntarily leaves the program, is unable to complete assigned tasks or is removed from membership for code of conduct violations. Members are responsible for maintaining the backpacks and contents while in the member's possession. Supplies may be replaced by the Webster County CERT Trainer.

#### **APPROVAL**

The current version of these standard operating guidelines for the Webster County CERT program is hereby adopted by the Webster County Citizen Corps Council on January 12, 2009. Future proposed changes should be brought to the attention of the Council.

## Webster County CERT Program Standard Operating Guidelines

### Acknowledgement Form

I hereby certify that I have read and fully understand the information presented in the Webster County CERT program Standard Operating Guidelines. I acknowledge that while I am operating as a Webster County CERT member, it is my duty to obey all federal, state and local laws.

As a CERT member I agree to use due care at whatever level I am activated, and will operate only within my scope of work and level of training. I will consider my own and my teammates' safety as the first priority. I will follow the guidance outlined in this document. I will follow the instructions of the Webster County CERT Trainer, the on scene commander or other emergency responders put in authority over me. In the event I am unable to communicate with the CERT Trainer, I will make decisions and perform CERT duties in a prudent, safe and reasonable manner.

---

Print Name

---

Signature

---

Date