

PRESSRELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Training

La Porte County, IN – John Jones, Director of Michigan City's Emergency Management Agency, announced that CERT training will begin on August 3rd. This will mark the eighth CERT class since its inception in October of 2003. There are 115 certified CERT members in the greater La Porte County community, and the first university CERT team in the state was developed at Purdue North Central. There are established CERT Teams in all of the six political wards in Michigan City. The courses are offered free of charge.

“Each year, many communities are rocked by severe weather, such as tornadoes, floods, winter storms, or by ‘man made disasters,’” said Jones, “and the damages can affect everyone. Disasters can severely restrict and overwhelm emergency response resources, communications, transportation and utilities and can leave individuals and entire neighborhoods cut off from outside emergency support.”

“We are offering Community Emergency Response Team courses,” Jones continued, “to train people to take care of themselves and then to help others in their communities for the first three days following a disaster. This is when debris-clogged or damaged roads, disrupted communications, or high volume of calls may prevent access by traditional emergency response personnel. The purpose of CERT training is to provide citizens with the basic skills required to handle virtually all of their own needs and then to be able to respond to their communities' needs in the aftermath of a disaster. CERT members will self-deploy in our neighborhoods for up to 72-hours until traditional help can arrive.”

The CERT course consists of 21 hours of training, and will be conducted at La Porte Hospital in La Porte. The class will be held in the lower level Auditorium. The schedule of classes is as follows:

Friday August 3 rd :	9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Monday August 6 th :	9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Wednesday August 8th: 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Friday August 10th: 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Classes are taught by professional emergency responders, including firefighters, emergency medical and law enforcement personnel from the community. Participants who successfully complete the course are certified by the State of Indiana.

The course agenda includes disaster preparedness, fire safety and suppression, disaster medical operations-assessment and treatment, life threatening injuries, light search and rescue operations, disaster psychology and terrorism overview. “The Course is as much hands on as it is classroom stated Jones, so the participants are kept active and interested. The course is geared for all ages, above 18, and for people of all physical abilities; there is a role for anyone that wants to help”. The course culminates with a Disaster Simulation Exercise.

“One of the most important functions of the CERT team during a disaster,” Jones said, “will be managing and directing the untrained volunteers who arrive at a disaster scene and want to be of assistance. During the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack, and after Hurricane Katrina, hundreds of thousands of volunteers appeared at disaster sites, police and fire departments, hospitals and Red Cross offices. While their help was needed, the trained emergency responders were needed to do the rescue work rather than to train those who wanted to help. The CERT course trains bystanders / volunteers ahead of time. FEMA reports that “up to 80% of all victims involved in a major disaster are cared for by friends, family, and neighbors”.

Jones said, “Our goal is to establish CERT teams in each of LaPorte County’s neighborhoods. Individuals who form a team of 8-10 people from their neighborhood will be given priority in registration for the class. They’ll be empowered to respond to disasters that affect their families and neighbors. We’ve received a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant to conduct these classes, and as additional funds are available, we’ll develop more teams.”

Men and women 18 years or older who are interested in becoming a Community Emergency Response Team member should call John Jones at 219/873-1499 or contact him via email at jjones@emichigancity.com for a registration form and informational brochure. Training applications can be picked up at City Hall in Michigan City from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday in the Clerk’s Department or in LaPorte at the Office of Emergency Management located in the Basement of the County Government Complex between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. In LaPorte call 326-6808 ext. 264.

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