

## Charleston County News Release

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### **Citizen Volunteers Wanted for Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)** *Upcoming courses begin Mar. 22, citizens can help neighbors in an emergency*

Charleston County's Emergency Preparedness Division is currently accepting applications from citizens who want to be a part of the County's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). The upcoming course runs from Thursday, Mar. 22 through May 10.

CERT is a federally-funded program, under the Citizens Corps Grant, that allows Charleston County employees to train citizens how to be better prepared in the event of a disaster and to be able to go out into their communities to help their neighbors after a disaster.

"Local government employees prepare for everyday emergencies, however, during a disaster, the number and scope of incidents can overwhelm conventional emergency services," said Jim Tarter, who coordinates the CERT program for Charleston County Government. "The CERT program is all-risk, all-hazard training. This valuable course is designed to help you protect yourself, your family, your neighbors and your neighborhood in an emergency situation."

CERT training is provided through a 30-hour course conducted over an eight-week period on Thursdays from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. CERT training is provided free of charge and is available to anyone 18 or older. The course is held at Charleston County's Lonnie Hamilton, III, Public Services Building at 4045 Bridge View Drive in North Charleston. Upon completion of the course, participants are presented with response equipment, a certificate and a CERT member identification card.

"CERT is a positive and realistic approach to emergency and disaster situations where first responders may be initially overwhelmed, and the actions of our citizens can make a difference," Tarter said. "We know that people will respond to others in need, without having prior training, so one goal of the CERT program is to help them respond effectively and efficiently without placing themselves or others in unnecessary danger."

In the CERT training, citizens learn to:

- Manage utilities and put out small fires
- Treat the three medical killers by opening airways, controlling bleeding and treating for shock
- Provide basic medical aid
- Search for and rescue victims safely
- Organize themselves and spontaneous volunteers to be effective
- Collect disaster intelligence to support official first responders

To register for the course, go to [www.charlestoncounty.org](http://www.charlestoncounty.org) and click on "Citizens Corps Programs," or contact Jim Tarter, Charleston County Emergency Preparedness Division, at (843) 202-7405 or [jtarter@charlestoncounty.org](mailto:jtarter@charlestoncounty.org).

#### **SIDEBAR**

- The first Charleston County CERT class was in 2003, and graduated approximately 25 members.
- Charleston County has trained approximately 300 CERT members.
- There are 21 CERT instructors.

- CERT is modeled after a program created by the Los Angeles City Fire Department, and the training promotes a partnering effort between emergency services and the people they serve.
- CERT is targeted toward neighborhoods, businesses, communities of faith, clubs and organizations, etc.
- Participants are trained in disaster preparedness, fire safety, disaster medical operations, light search and rescue, team organization, disaster psychology, and basic terrorism awareness.

- Written by Jennie Davis -