



HALF MOON BAY

FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

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## Community Emergency Response Team Information

The Half Moon Bay Fire Protection District is proud to announce the formation of a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program for residents of the coast. Classes will start in the Fall and go for 8 weeks.

Following a major disaster, your first responders who provide fire and medical services will not be able to meet the demand for these services. Factors such as number of victims, communication failures, and road blockages will prevent people from accessing emergency services they have come to expect at a moment's notice through 911. People will have to rely on each other for help in order to meet their immediate life saving and life sustaining needs.

One also expects that under these kinds of conditions, family members, fellow employees, and neighbors will spontaneously try to help each other. This was the case following the Mexico City earthquake where untrained, spontaneous volunteers saved 800 people. However, 100 people lost their lives while attempting to save others. This is a high price to pay and is preventable through training.

If we can predict that emergency services will not meet immediate needs following a major disaster, especially if there is no warning as in an earthquake, and people will spontaneously volunteer, what can government do to prepare citizens for this eventuality?

First, present citizens the facts about what to expect following a major disaster in terms of immediate services. Second, give the message about their responsibility for mitigation and preparedness. Third, train them in needed life saving skills with emphasis on decision making skills, rescuer safety, and doing the greatest good for the greatest number.

The CERT course will benefit any citizen who takes it. This individual will be better prepared to respond to and cope with the aftermath of a disaster. Additionally, if a community wants to supplement its response capability after a disaster, civilians can be recruited and trained as neighborhood, business, and government teams that, in essence, will be auxiliary responders. These groups can provide immediate assistance to victims in their area, organize spontaneous volunteers who have not had the training, and collect disaster intelligence that will assist professional responders with prioritization and

allocation of resources following a disaster. Since 1993 when this training was made available nationally by FEMA, communities in 28 States and Puerto Rico have conducted CERT training.

The CERT course will be delivered at the headquarters fire station at 1191 Main Street in Half Moon Bay by your firefighters who have the requisite knowledge and skills to instruct the sessions. The CERT training for community groups is usually delivered in 2 1/2 hour sessions, one evening a week over an 8-week period. The training consists of the following:

- **Session I, DISASTER PREPAREDNESS:** Addresses hazards to which people are vulnerable in their community. Materials cover actions that participants and their families take before, during, and after a disaster. As the session progresses, the instructor begins to explore an expanded response role for civilians in that they should begin to consider themselves disaster workers. Since they will want to help their family members and neighbors, this training can help them operate in a safe and appropriate manner. The CERT concept and organization are discussed as well as applicable laws governing volunteers in that jurisdiction.
- **Session II, DISASTER FIRE SUPPRESSION:** Briefly covers fire chemistry, hazardous materials, fire hazards, and fire suppression strategies. However, the thrust of this session is the safe use of fire extinguishers, sizing up the situation, controlling utilities, and extinguishing a small fire.
- **Session III, DISASTER MEDICAL OPERATIONS PART I:** Participants practice diagnosing and treating airway obstruction, bleeding, and shock by using simple triage and rapid treatment techniques.
- **Session IV, DISASTER MEDICAL OPERATIONS, PART II:** Covers evaluating patients by doing a head to toe assessment, establishing a medical treatment area, performing basic first aid, and practicing in a safe and sanitary manner.
- **Session V, LIGHT SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS:** Participants learn about search and rescue planning, size-up, search techniques, rescue techniques, and most important, rescuer safety.
- **Session VI, DISASTER PSYCHOLOGY AND TEAM ORGANIZATION:** Covers signs and symptoms that might be experienced by the disaster victim and worker. It addresses CERT organization and management principles and the need for documentation.
- **Session VII, COURSE REVIEW AND DISASTER SIMULATION:** Participants review their answers from a take home examination. Finally, they practice the skills that they have learned during the previous six sessions in disaster activity.
- During each session participants are required to bring safety equipment (gloves, goggles, mask) and disaster supplies (bandages, flashlight, dressings) which will

be used during the session. By doing this for each session, participants are building a disaster response kit of items that they will need during a disaster.

- Session VIII, TERRORISM RESPONSE: Participants will gain knowledge in terrorism threats and strategies in response. This module is new and is provided by the Office of Homeland Security.

Once participants have completed this training, it is important to keep involved and practiced in their skills. The District will offer periodic refresher sessions to reinforce the basic training. CERT teams can sponsor events such as drills, picnics, neighborhood clean up, and disaster education fairs which will keep them involved and trained.

CERT members will receive recognition for completing their training. CERT member graduates will receive ID cards, vests, helmets, and FRS radios.

CERT is about readiness, people helping people, rescuer safety, and doing the greatest good for the greatest number. CERT is a positive and realistic approach to emergency and disaster situations where citizens will be initially on their own and their actions can make a difference. Through training, citizens can manage utilities and put out small fires; treat the three killers by opening airways, controlling bleeding, and treating for shock; provide basic medical aid; search for and rescue victims safely; and organize themselves and spontaneous volunteers to be effective.

For more information, or to obtain an application, please contact the Half Moon Bay Fire Protection District administrative offices at 650-726-5213 or via the web at [www.hmbfire.org](http://www.hmbfire.org)