

## **Frequently Asked Questions:**

### **What is the origin of Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)?**

Following the tragic events that occurred on September 11, 2001, state and local government officials increased opportunities for citizens to become an integral part of protecting the homeland and supporting local first responders.

In January 2002, the President of the United States launched Citizen Corps, to capture the spirit of service that emerged throughout our communities following the terrorist attacks.

Citizen Corps programs build on the successful efforts that are in place in many communities around the country to prevent crime and respond to emergencies. Programs that started through local innovation are the foundation for Citizen Corps and this national approach to citizen participation in community safety.

Citizen Corps is coordinated nationally by the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In this capacity, FEMA works closely with other federal entities, state and local governments, first responders and emergency managers, the volunteer community, and the Corporation for National & Community Service.

Citizen Corps has five partners: **Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)**, Fire Corps, USA on Watch, Medical Reserve Corps, and **Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS)**.

The **Strongsville CERT** is a program of the **Strongsville Fire and Emergency Services** and was formed in 2005. The Strongsville Police Department sponsors the **Strongsville VIPS program**.

Strongsville CERT is one of many local CERT organizations in Cuyahoga County. Coordination of CERT teams within the county is the responsibility of the Cuyahoga County Office of Emergency Management.

### **How does CERT benefit the community?**

People who complete CERT training have a better understanding of the potential threats to their home, workplace and community. They can take the right steps to lessen the effects of these hazards on themselves, their homes, or workplaces. If a disaster happens that overwhelms local response capability, CERT members can apply the training learned in the classroom and exercises to give critical support to their family, neighbors, or associates in their immediate area until help arrives. When help arrives, CERT members provide useful information to responders and support their efforts, as directed at the disaster site. CERT members can also assist with non-emergency projects that improve the safety of the community such as community events (i.e., parades, festivals, holiday events, other planned gatherings).

### **What is the background of the current CERT Members?**

The Strongsville CERT team is comprised of a mixture of working and retired people. Our members have a wide range of experience such as medical, Fire and EMS service, manufacturing, logistics and transportation, construction, retail, finance and banking, insurance, information technology, education, business owners, homemakers, and students.

**What is the time commitment for a CERT member?**

CERT meetings occur once a month beginning in September going through June, usually on the second or third Wednesday of the month. A schedule of meeting dates is published annually. Meetings begin at 7:00 pm and last an hour to an hour and a half, depending on the agenda.

Depending on the community event schedule, we solicit volunteers to volunteer for two-hour shifts. It is up to each member to volunteer based on their personal availability. Members are required to have certifications in CPR/AED and First Aid. The initial training occurs during the new member CERT training program. Recertification is required every two years. We schedule recertification training for both CPR/AED and First Aid Training with Strongsville Fire and EMS for members requiring recertification. Each of these classes will require at least three hours to complete.

**I work full-time. Is it possible to only volunteer on holiday and weekend events?**

Yes, we have many full-time working members who volunteer only when they are available. Many of the community events are scheduled during weekends and holidays. Generally, during weekday events our shifts are scheduled after 5:00 p.m.

**Where are CERT meetings and training?**

The team meetings and training occur in the second-floor training room at Strongsville Fire station #4 located on 17000 Prospect Road.

**If I move outside of Strongsville, will I still be able to volunteer in Strongsville?**

You must be a resident of Strongsville and over 18 years of age to join Strongsville CERT. We have had people who belonged to another CERT team who moved into Strongsville and have been welcomed to become members of Strongsville CERT.

If a CERT member moves out of Strongsville, that person should check whether the new community has a CERT team and then transfer membership. If a member wants to stay involved with the Strongsville CERT team, s/he needs the approval of the Director of Strongsville CERT. If approved, members are expected to participate in Strongsville CERT meetings and volunteer opportunities. If the member does not participate, the membership will become inactive.