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**For Immediate Release**

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**NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (CERT) MEMBERS DURING NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK**

**April 9, 2019** – National Volunteer Week, April 7 – 13, is an opportunity to highlight the importance of service and the dedication of millions of volunteers nationwide. Volunteers play a crucial role in assisting organizations that contribute to making communities safer, healthier, and stronger. [According to the 2018 Volunteering in America report](#), 77.3 million adults volunteered through an organization in 2017.

NYC Emergency Management recently honored 45 Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members for completing more than 100 hours of community service during 2018. The agency held the recognition ceremony at its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in conjunction with the graduation ceremony of 44 new graduates that will join Community Emergency Response teams throughout the city. New York City Community Emergency Response Teams are groups of community-based volunteers who undergo an intensive 10-session basic training program in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response skills that include lessons in fire safety, search and rescue, traffic management, first aid and triage. After completing training, CERTs support their local communities by assisting City agencies that prepare for and respond to emergencies.

“National Volunteer Week gives us a chance to honor our CERT volunteers who dedicate so much of their time to assisting first responders and their communities,” **NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Joseph Esposito** said. “Whether they are holding emergency preparedness presentations in their community spaces or assisting during an emergency, their contributions to the city of New York cannot be overstated.”

One of CERTs’ major responsibilities includes community outreach through NYC Emergency Management’s public education campaign, Ready New York. Through the program, individuals learn about New York City hazards and prepare for various emergencies by writing an emergency plan, choosing a meeting place, gathering supplies for their home, and preparing a Go Bag. CERT members throughout the city hold regular Ready NY presentations with the goal of creating more prepared and resilient communities.

“I’ve always done work in my community because I felt it was my responsibility. I decided to become a CERT member so that I could acquire the knowledge and skills to pass on to my neighbors,” **Queens CERT Borough Coordinator Sandra Williams** said. “When we host Ready NY presentations in our communities, we’re ensuring that someone is that much more prepared for an emergency.”

“One of the most important roles as CERT members is educating the community. If communities aren’t prepared for emergencies, it can be life threatening,” **Brooklyn 18 CERT member Nancy**

**Walby** said. “CERT works to educate residents through community outreach, so that they are not caught off-guard when the next emergency strikes.”

CERT members also deploy to yearly planned events such as the TD Five Boro Bike Tour and TCS New York City Marathon, as well as unplanned events such as missing person searches, and large fires and building collapses where they assist with service center operations.

In 2017, CERT volunteers played a major role assisting New York City Emergency Management with the Hurricane Maria response efforts by preparing donations, supporting the City’s Hurricane Service Center, and distributing informational material to affected residents from Puerto Rico. In July 2018, CERT members also supported the city during the Flatiron steam pipe explosion, assisting residents at the reception center.

“Everybody should feel compassion for their neighbors,” **CERT Staten Island Borough Coordinator Steve Clohessy** said. “During emergencies, it’s imperative that if you know what to do, you assist others who may be having difficulty. I believe that is what CERT is all about.”

### **Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) in New York City**

The New York City CERT program started in 2003 with 106 volunteers. Today, there are more than 50 CERT teams and more than 1,200 credentialed CERT volunteers throughout the five boroughs. NYC CERT volunteers participate in a 10-session basic training program where they receive instruction from active members of the NYPD, FDNY and NYC Emergency Management. Volunteers are trained in disaster preparedness and basic emergency response skills, including fire safety, light search and rescue, disaster medical operations, and traffic management. After completing basic training, new members join local CERTs to support their communities by assisting City agencies that prepare for and respond to emergencies.

For more information about the CERT program, or if you are interested in becoming a CERT volunteer, call 311 or visit [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov).

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