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## **Borough of Ho-Ho-Kus CERT (Community Emergency Response Team)**

### **What is CERT?**

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program educates people about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. Using the training learned in the classroom and during exercises, CERT members can assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event when professional responders are not immediately available to help. CERT members also are encouraged to support emergency response agencies by taking a more active role in emergency preparedness projects in their community. (The above is copied from the official website of: <http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/> )

CERT is a concept developed in 1985 by the Los Angeles Fire Department. They recognized that citizens would very likely be on their own during the early stages of a catastrophic disaster. Accordingly, the LAFD decided that some basic training in disaster survival and rescue skills would be necessary to improve the ability of citizens to survive until emergency personnel could arrive. Thus, CERT teams were created to provide vital services in the absence of emergency responders. Today, all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, USVI, Guam and several foreign countries institute the CERT system. In NJ there are 410 registered CERT Programs with over 15,000 volunteers state-wide and in Bergen County alone there are over 2,000 CERT trained volunteers.

The events of September 11 will never be forgotten; also not forgotten is how the spirit of America was awakened that day and citizens came forth to volunteer their services. President George W. Bush harnessed this spirit of volunteerism with the Citizen Corps Program. CERT is a part of the Citizen Corps Program.

# What is the Role of CERT in an Emergency?

CERTS have been used to:

- Search for lost or kidnapped children
- Promote community awareness of potential hazards and preparedness measures
- Assist in evacuations and traffic control
- Staff Emergency Operations Centers
- Provide Emergency Operations Center security; driving, information, assistance for disabled visitors and minor first aid
- Supplement staffing at special events such as parades
- Manage “spontaneous/convergent” volunteers
- Assist Red Cross and other relief organizations on mass care
- Light search and rescue operations

## Why should I Join?

1. CERT volunteers want to be better prepared for the hazards that threaten their communities -- “neighbor helping neighbor”
2. CERT volunteers “stand in the gap” and take care of themselves in the aftermath of a major disaster when first responders are overwhelmed or unable to respond because of communication or transportation difficulties
3. CERTs act as volunteer resources that can assist with public safety activities
4. Everyone can benefit from preparedness education and training
5. After a catastrophic disaster, citizens will volunteer to help. Without proper training these people can expose themselves to potential injury and even death! Experience has shown that basic training in disaster survival and rescue skills improves the ability of citizens to survive until professional responders or other assistance arrives.
6. Personal reasons to join:
  - Challenge oneself
  - chance to learn new skills
  - tap into your creativity
  - meet other people
  - take a break from the routine of life
  - just feel like accomplishing something
  - opportunity to help yourself, your family, your neighbor and your community
  - Look in a mirror at home and see a major reason
  - Last but not least, take out your wallet and look at your loved ones...

# What about the Ho-Ho-Kus team?

In the Fall of 2004, OEM Coordinator Jay Ludwig and Deputy OEM Coordinator, Police Chief Gregory Kallenberg attended a Chamber of Commerce meeting and asked for volunteers for a new endeavor called CERT. Stanley Kober volunteered and went to the "Train-The-Trainer" course, learned about CERT, and under the guidance of the Borough OEM Coordinators Ludwig and Chief Kallenberg, established a format for the Borough of Ho-Ho-Kus CERT program.

In January 2005, a town-wide presentation was made on CERT and the Borough's CERT unit was born. Basic classes have been conducted in the Borough and at the Bergen County Law and Public Safety Institute (BCLPSI) in Mahwah and numerous in-service and advance classes on electrical wire safety, hazardous materials, shelter operations and management, CPR, and others also have been conducted. The team now comprises of 53 members who have been used in evacuation drills, numerous town events, baby car seat checks, as well as having been trained through numerous CERT classes and drills in the Borough, at BCLPSI, and with other local municipalities. Members have participated in CERT exercises at Picatinny Arsenal in Sussex County, CERT Day events at BCLPSI, decontamination drills at a local hospital, local emergency shelter operations, and many other activities. Most recently, Ho-Ho-Kus CERT hosted a joint two day exercise with Mahwah CERT which covered day time and night time operations, in which the CERT personnel used all their skills learned in many classes in "on-the-ground" events in woodlands and marshlands. In addition, the operations were conducted using Incident Command System (ICS) structure and comprised of numerous interagency operations with organizations such as the Ho-Ho-Kus Police Department and Fire Department, Ho-Ho-Kus OEM, Ho-Ho-Kus Ambulance Corps, Bergen County OEM, Mahwah OEM and others.

## Photos of Several Recent Ho-Ho-Kus CERT Events



Photo at left shows Ho-Ho-Kus CERT Team Leader demonstrating at a recent daytime exercise how to make stretcher from duct tape and two poles

Photo at right shows Ho-Ho-Kus Incident Commander (in white vest) debriefing CERT personnel after a night time exercise





**In photo at left, CERT personnel size-up a situation in an exercise where they discovered a deceased (dummy) “victim” pinned under a fallen tree.**

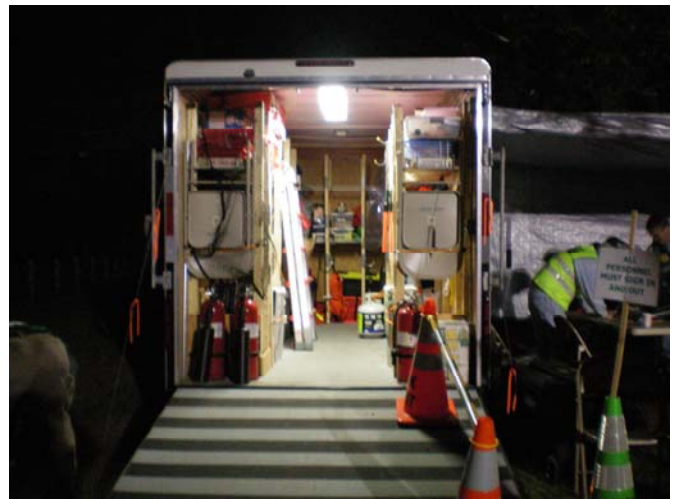
**In photo at right, an instructor from the Bergen County Law and Public Safety Institute conducts a class on Hazardous Materials Awareness for CERT members from Ho-Ho-Kus and Mahwah.**





**In photo at left, the Ho-Ho-Kus CERT trailer is seen alongside the Incident Command Post at a recent night operation.**

**In photo at right, the Ho-Ho-Kus CERT trailer is opened for use at a night operation.**



**In photo at right, Stanley A. Kober, CERT Program Coordinator looks on as Mayor Thomas Randall presents a Certificate of Appreciation to CERT Team Leader Joe Stewart for a job well done at a recent Joint Exercise.**



**In photo at right, Ho-Ho-Kus CERT members partner with the local VFW Post 192 at a Flag Day information table**



**In photo at left, a CERT member assists a driver in completing the necessary paperwork before the local Police Officers check out and adjust a child's car seat.**

**In photo at right, Ho-Ho-Kus CERT members ready their area for a Disaster Preparedness Day event in the Borough Hall parking lot.**





**In photo at left, Ho-Ho-Kus CERT members ready the CERT Trailer and their table for a Ho-Ho-Kus Ducky Derby Day event on the Town Green.**

**In photo at right, Ho-Ho-Kus CERT Members take a break during a County CERT Day Event at the Bergen County Law and Public Safety Institute at Mahwah, NJ.**



# How Can I Join?

If you want to volunteer your services and become trained to protect yourself, your family, your neighbors, and your friends from disasters; natural or man-made..... *Become a CERT member.*

To become a CERT member you must be at least 18 years of age in New Jersey and preferably possess a valid NJ driver's license. Young people between 13 and 17 years old may join TEEN CERT.

Pickup a CERT expression of interest card at the Ho-Ho-Kus Borough Hall or Police Department as soon as possible or contact Stanley A. Kober, Ho-Ho-Kus CERT Coordinator at 201-445-1121 for an application and schedule.

**For more information contact *Stanley Kober*,  
the Ho-Ho-Kus CERT Program Manager, at [sakober@yahoo.com](mailto:sakober@yahoo.com)**

**or**

***Police Chief Gregory Kallenberg* at: 201-652-1700**