 

Menlo Park Fire Protection District CERT

Standard Operating Procedures

Article 1. Authority

1. The Menlo Park Fire Protection District Community Emergency Response Team (MPFPD CERT) receives its direction and operates at the sole discretion of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District.

Article 2. Mission Statement

1. The MPFPD CERT program will train individuals in neighborhoods, businesses, schools, and community organizations in emergency preparedness and basic disaster response techniques; enabling them to prepare, as volunteers, to take an active role in providing critical support in a safe manner to emergency service personnel during emergencies/disasters.

Article 3. Name

1. The name of this organization is the Menlo Park Fire Protection District Community Emergency Response Team (MPFPD CERT) and was formed in March 2004, and Chartered in 2016.

Article 4. Goals and Objectives

1. CERT is about readiness, people helping people, rescuer safety, and doing the greatest good for the greatest number of people. CERT is part of the National Citizen Corps effort, endorsed by the President of the United States and the Department of Homeland Security.
2. CERT is a positive and realistic approach to emergency and disaster situations where citizens may initially be on their own and their actions can make a difference.
3. CERT is designed to train, educate, and inform the public regarding emergency preparedness.
4. CERT members may be asked to perform other duties by the MPFPD.
5. CERT is used to train and inform the public about emergency preparedness and response so they may be better prepared to provide critical support in a safe manner to their neighbors and community before, during, and after a major disaster.
6. All participation in CERT is voluntary.

Article 5. Location

1. The principal office and meeting site for CERT shall be the MPFPD, 170 Middlefield Road, Menlo Park, CA 94025.

Article 6. Meetings and Drills

1. Neighborhood Team Leaders will meet with a representative of the MPFPD twice per year.
2. Each Neighborhood Team Leader will hold neighborhood team meetings quarterly, with a minimum of semi-annual meetings.
3. MPFPD will hold CERT member meetings semi-annually.
4. MPFPD will hold an annual emergency drill in coordination with the Cities of Atherton, Menlo Park, East Palo Alto, and San Mateo County Department of Emergency Management, and will include CERT members.

Article 7. Rules of Conduct

1. Members of CERT serve at the sole discretion of the MPFPD.
2. CERT members are volunteers of the MPFPD. As such, their status as a volunteer is contingent upon performing their duties with the utmost care and consideration.
3. CERT members may not access or enter MPFPD premises or facilities in their role as a CERT member without prior permission. CERT members must be accompanied by a MPFPD employee when on MPFPD premises unless prior permission to access is received.
4. CERT members are not emergency services personnel as defined by state law and as such are not exempt from federal, state, and local laws when responding to emergencies. Therefore, all CERT members must use due care, diligence, and appropriate safety measures when responding or reporting as directed to emergencies.
5. All participating volunteers must be trained and understand the coordinated command and control structure of CERT and agree to operate within its constraints.
6. Members of CERT are prohibited from communicating with the media and/or making representations on behalf of CERT in any manner, without the approval of the MPFPD.
7. CERT members shall not carry or possess any weapons or be intoxicated or impaired while undertaking CERT activities.
8. CERT members shall not engage in harassment or discrimination which occurs when prohibited verbal, visual, or physical conduct is directed at individuals because of their race, religion, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation (including heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality), ethnic or national origin, ancestry, citizenship status, uniformed service member status, marital status, family relationship, pregnancy, age, cancer or HIV/AIDS related medical condition, genetic characteristics, and physical or mental disability (whether perceived or actual) (“protected classification”). Retaliation against any individual who has acted either as a complainant, or for assisting a complainant in taking action, or for acting as a witness or advocate on behalf of another individual in a legal or other proceeding to obtain a remedy for a breach of this SOP, is also prohibited.

To constitute harassment, discrimination, or retaliation, as defined by law, the prohibited verbal, visual, or physical conduct must be directed at an individual because of the individual’s protected classification or perceived classification, but the MPFPD has zero tolerance for any verbal, visual, or physical conduct prohibited by this SOP. Instead, a single act can violate this SOP and provide grounds for dismissal or other appropriate sanctions no matter what is motivating the behavior.

1. CERT members shall always conduct themselves in a professional manner. This includes avoiding or removing themselves from conflicts, and not discrediting this organization intentionally.
2. Training topics, subject matter, or activities not covered by these Standard Operating Procedures or the CERT Citizen Corps Program, must be approved by the MPFPD. Some examples of actions that could result in immediate removal from the CERT program are:
   1. Self-deployment to an incident
   2. Unprofessional, aggressive, insubordinate, discriminatory, or harassing behavior toward other CERT members, residents, first responders, or other authorities
   3. Failure to follow direction of public safety personnel
   4. Conviction of a felony, or a misdemeanor, including pleas of guilty or nolo contendere

Article 8. Membership

1. MPFPD residents may apply to be a member of the MPFPD CERT program.
2. Volunteer applicants must be at least 18 years of age to apply to the full CERT program. This age limit may also be at the discretion of the MPFPD. However, any applicants under 18 years of age must attend the program with a parent or guardian, who must sign a Parent Permission Form.
3. Residents ages 15-18 may participate in the teen CERT program.
4. Applicant approval is at the sole discretion of the MPFPD.
5. All members of the MPFPD CERT community must read and sign this document (see last page, Standard Operating Procedures Agreement) and the Release of Liability, Hold Harmless/Permission Request/Media Permission form, become a Disaster Service Worker (by filling out the appropriate form and being sworn in), and complete Incident Command System (ICS) 100.
6. CERT members must satisfactorily complete all modules, including the final skills day, of the CERT Basic Training Program.
7. Level 1 or 2 members are required to follow the guidelines set forth in Appendix A: Participation Levels document.
8. Members shall not use their CERT membership for personal gain.
9. Many members of CERT have skills beyond what is taught through the CERT program, e.g., physicians and other health professionals, heavy equipment operators, advanced search and rescue personnel, etc. While these skills may be helpful during an emergency or disaster, they are outside the CERT scope of practice as a MPFPD CERT member.
10. The MPFPD respects the confidentiality of any information members provide. The MPFPD will maintain contact information (including home address, email, and phone number) and will only release email addresses to Neighborhood Team Leaders for the purpose of communicating about CERT-related topics or as otherwise required by law. At any time, a CERT member may choose to opt-out and will not be contacted unless they request it.
11. If a member leaves the CERT program for any reason, all issued equipment and identification shall be returned to MPFPD within 30 days of notification.

Article 9. Organization

Organization Chart

Fire Chief

Fire Marshal

Community Volunteer Coordinator

Program Instructors

CERT Members

1. The MPFPD CERT program shall be managed by MPFPD’s designated CERT Community Volunteer Coordinator who shall report to the District Coordinator.
2. The CERT members located within each city served by the MPFPD will comprise a branch in the MPFPD CERT program supporting an overall “One Program” structure
3. The CERT organization aligns with the Incident Command System (ICS). Some positions and roles within the MPFPD CERT organization have clearly defined responsibilities and requirements.
4. Documentation of members’ hours, participation, training, and contact information will be sourced primarily from sign-in sheets (e.g., ICS Form 211) and coordinated through the CERT database maintained by the CERT Program Manager and Community Volunteer Coordinator.
5. CERT program information will be located on the MPFPD CERT website.

Article 10. Membership Levels

1. Membership of CERT will be divided into one of the following categories. Refer to Appendix A: Participation Levels for additional details.
   1. Level 3: Awareness
      1. Graduates of the CERT Core Training Program. Upon completion of the CERT Core Training Program, graduates shall receive a certificate of completion and backpack (including CERT hardhat, goggles, vest, work gloves, etc.).
   2. Level 2: Response
      1. Graduates of the CERT Core Training Program. Upon completion of the CERT Core Training Program, graduates shall receive a certificate of completion, backpack (including CERT hardhat, goggles, vest, work gloves, etc.), and ID card.
      2. These individuals may be available to respond to request from the MPFPD for assistance, or to help promote CERT at community events. In addition to being CERT Core Training Program graduates who meet the requirements of Level 3, there are additional requirements for training and participation to maintain this membership level as reflected in Appendix A: Participation Levels.
      3. Must complete Disaster Service Worker (DSW) registration and swearing-in process
   3. Level 1: Advanced
      1. Graduates of the CERT Core Training Program. Upon completion of the CERT Core Training Program, graduates shall receive a certificate of completion, backpack (including CERT hardhat, goggles, vest, work gloves, etc.), and ID card.
      2. In addition to the requirements for Level 2, these members must undergo additional approved advanced training as reflected in Appendix A: Participation Levels.
      3. Must complete Disaster Service Worker (DSW) swearing-in process
2. At MPFPD’s discretion, schedule, and expense, Level 2 and/or Level 1 members may be asked to submit to a Live Scan background check to maintain membership.

Article 11. Disaster Service Worker Process

1. The State of California Disaster Service Worker (DSW) Volunteer Program was created to provide worker’s compensation benefits in the event a Disaster Service Worker volunteer is injured while performing authorized disaster service duties.
2. California law requires individuals to register with an Accredited Disaster Council, the Governor’s Office or Emergency Services, or an authorized state agency in order to become a Disaster Service Worker volunteer.
3. Per the San Mateo County Emergency Services Council (ESC) Resolution dated April 21, 2022, the County of San Mateo ESC is in agreement with the CERT sponsor Jurisdictions and Agencies to grant DSW oath administration authority to ESC member agency staff that hold the position of an Emergency Manager or CERT Program Manager/Coordinator or Fire Service/Law Enforcement Staff rank.
4. CERT sponsor jurisdictions and agencies in the San Mateo Operational Area are Authorized Designees able to administer the DSW Program, approve training and exercises, and activate CERT teams in accordance with the state DSWVP Guidance for their respective Cal OES recognized and FEMA registered programs.
5. Once sworn in, the DSW status of the CERT Volunteer will be in effect anywhere in the San Mateo Operational Area and will be duly recognized by all jurisdictions with the San Mateo Operational Area.
6. Level 1 and 2 MPFPD CERT members must fill out the DSW registration form and be sworn in by an authorized designee from the MPFPD.
7. In the event a CERT volunteer is injured while activated or participating in approved training or exercises, a DSW claim will be filed with CalOES.

Article 12. Activation

1. Level 1 and/or 2 CERT members may be activated during an emergency or disaster.
2. All CERT members who respond to activation must have completed the Disaster Service Worker registration and swearing-in process.
3. During an emergency, CERT member activation must be approved by the MPFPD Chief or his/her designee.
4. No member of CERT can self-activate. If a CERT member self-activates, he/she will forfeit all protection from liability provided by the CERT program and may be dismissed from the program.
5. Any time a CERT member is activated, information regarding the extent of activation needs to be documented by an individual CERT member on ICS Form 214 Unit Log. This information needs to be returned to their Incident Commander at the conclusion of the operational period. At a minimum, this information should include:
   1. Name of CERT member
   2. Assignments given and action taken
   3. Any outcomes, positive or negative, including injuries sustained
6. CERT members must operate within the scope of their CERT training, as well as comply with all federal, state, and local laws when functioning as a CERT member.
7. Non-CERT trained volunteers are never to be recruited by MPFPD CERT members to perform CERT duties during an emergency. If approached by non-CERT trained volunteers, ask those individuals to check on their immediate neighbors and call 911 with any emergency needs or updates.
8. When activated, CERT members under the age of 18 must always remain with a CERT member over the age of 18.
9. Any CERT member who suffers an injury while performing an assigned CERT task must immediately report the injury incurred to a supervising member of the MPFPD.
10. Failure to report injuries will jeopardize a CERT member’s ability to receive worker’s compensation benefits, and any recovery for such injury is specifically and expressly limited to that available under the State of California’s Worker’s Compensation Insurance.
11. When activated, Level 1 and 2 CERT members are covered under the State of California’s Disaster Service Worker’s program.
12. Once the emergency has been resolved, the supervising member of the MPFPD will deactivate the CERT members/teams.

Article 13. CERT Volunteer & Activation Opportunities

1. Community Events
   1. Staff CERT booth at community events such as Menlo-Atherton Love Our Earth Day, East Palo Alto Cinco de Mayo Festival, San Mateo County Disaster Preparedness Day, and other emergency preparedness/safety events
   2. Provide education, represent CERT, and help recruit volunteers to attend future classes
2. Community Education
   1. Distribute emergency preparedness and awareness materials to neighborhoods
   2. Provide education, represent CERT, and help recruit volunteers to attend future classes
3. Small-Scale Emergencies and Disasters
   1. Assist with storm prep and response, e.g., clearing storm drains or filling sandbags
   2. Assist with heat waves, e.g., distribute water or other cooling supplies
   3. Assist with communications to neighborhoods during power outages or cellular communication outages
   4. Distribute food, water, or other supplies to neighborhoods in need during power outages
   5. Provide traffic control support
   6. Staff evacuation and cooling centers
   7. Staff firefighter rehab at trainings, and real-world emergencies
4. Large-Scale Emergencies and Disasters
   1. Support neighborhoods and first responders as needed upon activation

Article 14. CERT Activation Procedure

1. MPFPD Fire Chief, District Coordinator, Battalion Chief, or Captain makes decision to activate CERT. Authorized representatives from cities and police departments within the MPFPD jurisdiction may also request CERT team activation.
2. Communication methods that may be used to activate
   1. Text/Email message sent via SMCAlert to active CERT members
   2. An announcement via text, email, or call from your Neighborhood Team Leader, who has received an official announcement from a MPFPD representative
   3. An official announcement over the MPFPD emergency HAM frequency of 147.570 MHz
   4. An official announcement on local commercial TV or radio
3. CERT leaders or members shall not call MPFPD or 911 to ask for updates or more info

Article 15. CERT Roles When Activated During Emergencies

1. When a disaster occurs, CERT members are to first take care of themselves and their families, as well as conduct an initial size-up of their home or workplace. CERT members should also reduce immediate dangers that may include turning off utilities, unplugging appliances, suppressing small fires, evacuating the immediate area, and securing their family.
2. Once CERT members, along with their home and family, are secure, the members should report to their assigned Incident Command Post, gathering (windshield survey) information and documenting along the way.
3. Work with other CERT members to establish a command post, staging area, and medical triage and treatment areas.
4. Collect damage information and develop a plan of operation based on life-saving priorities and available resources.
5. Apply their training to situations where CERT members can make a difference. Establish and maintain communication with first responders.

Article 16. Identification

1. If activated, a CERT identification card must always be worn on the outermost garment. Members should wear their CERT vest and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), unless otherwise directed by MPFPD personnel.
2. If the CERT ID card is lost or stolen, it is the responsibility of the CERT member to report this to the CERT Program Manager immediately upon discovery.

Article 17. Roles & Responsibilities

1. MPFPD Fire Marshal
   1. Responsible for overall program oversight, reporting, and direction
2. MPFPD Community Volunteer Coordinator
   1. Responsible for day-to-day program oversight and operation
3. MPFPD Program Manager
   1. Responsible for classes and communications
4. Neighborhood Team Leaders (Volunteer)
   1. Appointed by the Community Volunteer Coordinator
   2. Terms typically last no more than 2 years but may be extended by the Community Volunteer Coordinator
   3. Hold neighborhood team meetings quarterly or as needed
   4. Meet with a representative of the MPFPD twice per year or as needed
   5. Plan training exercises for the neighborhood
   6. Collect attendance records (training & meetings) and submit to the Community Volunteer Coordinator
   7. Develop their skills and their team’s ability to respond in a disaster
5. Team Members
   1. Comply with the standards established in these Standard Operating Procedures

Article 18. Training

1. CERT Basic training is in accordance with the current Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and California Citizens Corps guidelines.
2. Each CERT member will receive a book or digital copy of the CERT participant manual.
3. All training presented to CERT members, including materials, must be approved by the MPFPD prior to use and distribution.

Article 19. Finances

1. All funds received by the MPFPD CERT, including but not limited to grant awards, donations, and proceeds from fundraising, will be deposited with and controlled by the MPFPD.
2. All purchase requests shall be submitted in writing to the MPFPD for review and approval.

Article 20. Electronic Media, Printed Media, & Interviews

1. The MPFPD shall approve the substance and content of all electronic and printed media that are associated with or related to the MPFPD CERT program. Included is anything that is identified with the MPFPD CERT logo or the MPFPD name or acronym.
2. An exception to this policy is correspondence between members or via personal email.

Article 21. Addendums

1. To address specific needs or future topics, addendums may be added to these Standard Operating Procedures.

Standard Operating Procedures Agreement

Menlo Park Fire Protection District CERT Activation

The MPFPD will activate you when they feel the professional first responders need additional assets, and the task is within our CERT scope of training.

I have read and understand the Menlo Park Fire Protection District (MPFPD) Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). I agree to follow this SOP while participating in the MPFPD CERT program. I understand that not following this SOP may result in my removal from the program.

I understand and acknowledge that I am engaging in the CERT program as a volunteer and not as an employee, agent, official, or representative of MPFPD, and not entitled to benefits or compensation from MPFPD.

I agree to abide by all MPFPD policies, and the Rules of Conduct set forth in this SOP, including but not limited to policies prohibiting harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. I will not participate if I am under the influence of alcohol or any drug that could impair my physical or mental abilities. In the course of my service, I may learn of, be told, or be asked to relay information of a private, confidential, or privileged nature, which could include private health information. I will not, under and circumstance, disclose private, confidential, or privileged information unless explicitly directed by the designated managing supervisor with express authority to give such direction. I agree not to take or post any photos of a sensitive and/or private matter for personal use or for sharing on social media without express permission from the designated managing supervisor.

I agree at all times to act within the scope of my training and CERT classification. I will perform only those tasks assigned to me, observe all safety rules, and use care in performing my assignments. I will not attempt to do work that I do not understand, that is beyond my training, or that is beyond my physical capabilities, nor will I use unfamiliar or unsafe tools.

I hereby grant and authorize MPFPD the right to take, edit, copy, exhibit, publish, distribute, and make use of any and all pictures or video taken of me to be used in and/or for legally promotional materials without payment or any other consideration. This authorization extends to all languages, media, formats, and markets now known or hereafter devised. This authorization shall continue indefinitely unless I otherwise revoke said authorization in writing.

I understand that some assignments may include activities that may be hazardous to me and may involve certain inherent risks from over-exertion or from environmental conditions, including but not limited to flooding, fires, sun exposure, or dangerous terrain. Despite the risks, I still choose to participate in the CERT program and assume the risks of doing so. I am not aware of any physical, mental, or other health responsibility of mental and physical fitness to safely participate in the CERT program.

I hereby release from liability, indemnify, hold harmless, and waive my right to sue MPFPD, its elected and appointed officials, officers, employees, agents, and volunteers (collectively, “MPFPD Personnel”) for any and all claims, losses, liabilities, damages, costs, injuries, or expenses arising out of or connected in any way with my participation in the CERT program, including acts of omissions by MPFPD personnel. I understand that this release of liability is binding on my heirs, assigns, or any other persons acting on my behalf or the behalf of my estate.

I warrant that I am of the age of consent (18 years or older) and that I am competent to contract in my own name. I have read this release before signing below and I fully understand the contents, meaning, and impact of this release.

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Signature Date

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Printed Name Neighborhood/Emergency Response

District

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