

## Alexandria CERT Activities

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**Teen CERT.** The Spring 2024 program kicked off at ACPS, with 13 students and one parent participating. The sessions are Wednesday afternoons February 21 – May 1 with Sunday afternoon field trips on March 10 at the EOC, April 14 at Station 210, and April 21 at APD headquarters. In all there will be 11 sessions, up from the 9 held in Fall 2023.

The course content was overhauled based on lessons learned from the fall. The units are presented in a different order, with more activities, discussions, and videos. The primary instructors are Kevin Coleman and Reba Winstead. Graduates of the Fall 2024 Teen CERT cohort act as facilitators. Other CERTs serve as facilitators for the Sunday field trips.

There was a meeting at ACHS with Principal Duncan and others on March 8 to brief them on CERT and Teen CERT. Two graduates of the Fall 2023 Teen CERT cohort also attended. Carlton Gerald from the ACPS School Security Office described his vision for using the trained students in situations such as reunifying the student population with family after evacuating the school. This meeting is the start of a planning process.

A summer camp format for Teen CERT has been postponed for consideration until 2025. Options include a one-week full-day program, a two-week half-day program, and a three-weekend (Friday night – Saturday – Sunday) program.

**CERT Basic Training.** The Spring course began on March 5 and will continue on Tuesday evenings through April 16. While 47 people expressed interest in the course, the actual number registered is 28. The number of in-person sessions has been increased to five to provide more hands-on practice, with only two sessions via Zoom. The course content has also been tweaked, borrowing some activities from the Teen CERT materials.

**CERT Basic Exercises.** The final exercises will take place jointly for the adult and teen classes on Saturday, May 4 at Station 210. The final exercises have been revamped based on feedback; most significantly, the Mass Casualty Incident has been divided into three “acts.” Laurel Brase and Steve Johnson have contributed to the rewrite. Facilitators and role players will be solicited at the end of March.

**Volunteer Management System.** We are doing a pilot of Volgistics as a hosted platform to manage CERT volunteer records. It can support fairly detailed profile records on graduated adult and teen CERTs, participants in adult and teen CERT Basic Training, and those who have expressed interest in / applied for the adult and teen CERT Basic Training. Each of these types can be sent emails and text messages. We are still working out how to manage opportunities: trainings and outreach events for current volunteers and tracking attendance for participants in CERT Basic Training. There is an app called VicNet for volunteers. It has a home page and lets volunteers manage and update their profiles by, for example, uploading certificates of FEMA courses they have passed.

Kevin Coleman, Beth Mahar, Doyle Cockram, and Marjorie Windelberg are “system operators” for the system.

**CERT Meeting February 24.** Catherine Weinraub, the historian for Friendship Firehouse, gave a presentation on the volunteer fire company and details on significant fires in Alexandria’s history. CERT volunteer Chris Smith then led an interactive session on “What’s In Your Bag?” to exchange ideas on supplies and equipment CERTs can add to their basic CERT gear. He brought a truck full of emergency supplies for home and being on the road.

**Traffic and Crowd Management Webinar March 14.** An introduction traffic and crowd management covered planning for events, dealing with unplanned events (such as a traffic accident scene), understanding crowd psychology, and signaling to manage traffic. Instructors were Beth Mahar and Steve Johnson. MRC, Arlington CERT, and DC CERT were invited to attend. In all, 20 people attended.

A traffic management drill will be held at a future date, possibly at Northern Virginia Community College’s B parking lot.

**FLETC Active Shooter Training Support March 20.** Alexandria Police Department requested 10-12 victim actors for a Federal Law Enforcement Training Center training course. It is an all-day exercise. The invitation has gone out to Alexandria CERT, MRC, and Arlington CERT.

**SKYWARN® Basics March 21.** Kevin Coleman has arranged a presentation by the National Weather Service. Registration is required, as seating is limited.

**Radio Emergency Communications.** A class on radio emergency communications is under development and will be offered in the summer.

**MRC Trainings.** Several CERTs attended MRC’s February 9 REVIVE! Opioid Lay Rescuer Training and the February 28 training on Health Risk posed by Radon Gas in Virginia.

**Mental Health First Aid Training Webinars.** CERTs have been encouraged to sign up for training sponsored by the Department of Community and Human Services and the Council for Mental Health Wellbeing. The trainings are offered on a variety of dates in full-day and half-day formats; see <https://www.alexandriava.gov/youth-development/suicide-risks-and-prevention-resources-and-information#MentalHealthFirstAid>.

**Photos and More on the Document Portal.** Photos from the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in October 23 were finally received and uploaded to the Document Portal. Thanks to Vice Mayor Amy Jackson for arranging for a photographer from the Zebra to take pictures!

Also on the Document Portal are handouts for CERT Basic Training and the trainings for the “seasoned” CERT volunteers, references, and other materials. The link to the portal is <https://docs.alexandriavacert.org/index.php/s/bSFjMMfSAeddmSw>.

**CERT Newsletter.** The April – June issue has two themes. The front page contains information on general emergency preparedness planning and what to include in various emergency kits for shelter-in-place, evacuation, vehicle, and work. The back page is devoted to domestic violence: information and resources, safety plans, and signs of abusive behaviors. All back issues of the newsletter are in the Public folder on the Alexandria CERT document portal: <https://docs.alexandriavacert.org/index.php/s/bSFjMMfSAeddmSw>.

## Regional Activities

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**Arlington CERT Exercise March 16.** Three Alexandria CERTs participated in Arlington CERT’s skills refresher exercise. The scenario was search, rescue, and medical treatment after an earthquake.

**Dulles Airport Exercise April 27.** Fairfax CERT has started recruiting up to 130 role players, moulage artists, and administrative support from CERTs across the region. This is an all-day event. Airports are required to conduct a mass casualty incident exercise once every 3 years.

**NCR CERT Consortium.** Note: The majority of NCR CERT Consortium participants are CERT volunteer leaders; the government agencies sponsoring local CERTs are not on the calls.

The Consortium met on February 8 and discussed starting a strategic planning process. Separately, a meeting of training leads (not just program coordinators) is to be scheduled. The March 14 meeting covered the National CERT Association conference and each jurisdiction provided a brief update of their current activities.

**National CERT Association Conference.** The conference will take place the July 23 – July 26 at the DC Convention Center. There is also a possible half-day mass casualty incident exercise on Saturday, July 27 with support from FEMA.

The opening plenary will feature FEMA Administrator Deana Criswell will be the keynote speaker. Presentations, panel discussions, and multi-day specialized trainings will be offered Tuesday afternoon through Friday.

Presentations are of general interest on a wide variety of emergency preparedness and management topics. Non-CERT personnel that will be invited to attend include local Fire / EMS / Law Enforcement, local OEMs; MRC; radio clubs; and AmeriCorps.

Some specialized trainings are CERT-focused: CERT Train-the-Trainer, CERT Master Instructor, and CERT Program Manager. These require endorsement from the attendee’s jurisdictional authority. TEEX (Texas A&M Engineering Extension) will teach a multi-day class on Wide Area Search.

A Save the Date flyer will be ready next week. Registration costs are still being worked out.

The week before the conference, NCA volunteers will also meet with FEMA personnel as well as engage in lobbying in Congress on behalf of CERT programs nationally.

The conference planning committee held its first meetings on February 27 and March 12; the committee will meet bi-weekly. Co-chairs are Suu-Va Tai of California Office of Emergency Services and Frances Whalen of DC CERT. Members are from CERTs across the United States and they are chairs of the subcommittees that have been established. Marjorie Windelberg is chair of the Logistics subcommittee. The subcommittees will meet and work independently, reporting status to the planning committee. Staff for subcommittees is needed.

DC HSEMA has committed \$30,000 in UASI funds for the conference; some of these funds will support “scholarships” for volunteers who work on subcommittees and during the conference. The DC Mayor’s office is expected to provide staff to work on conference operations as well.