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# UNIT 6: CERT ORGANIZATION

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**In this unit you will learn about:**

- **CERT Organization:** How to organize and deploy volunteer resources according to CERT organizational principles.
- **Rescuer Safety:** How to protect your own safety and your buddy's during search and rescue.
- **Documentation:** Strategies for documenting situation and resource status.
- **Team Organization:** A tabletop exercise will give you the opportunity to apply your knowledge of team organization.



UNIT 6: CERT ORGANIZATION

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**INTRODUCTION AND UNIT OVERVIEW**

In previous units, you learned specific strategies and tasks to use in specific situations. In this unit, you will use that knowledge in a team environment, using the CERT organization as a foundation.

**OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Describe the CERT organization.
  - Identify how CERTs interrelate with ICS.
  - Explain CERT documentation requirements.
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**CERT ORGANIZATION**

Emergency on-scene management in a disaster situation is needed to:

- Maintain the safety of disaster workers. CERT Incident Commanders must continually prioritize response activities based on the team's capability and training and the principle that rescuer safety is the number-one concern. CERT functional leadership assigns activities and accounts for team members. CERT team members work in the buddy system and respond based on their sizeup of the situations that they encounter.
- Provide clear leadership and organizational structure by developing a chain of command and roles that are known by all team members. Each CERT member has only one person that he or she takes direction from and responds to.
- Improve the effectiveness of rescue efforts. Disaster information is collected and responses are prioritized based on rescuer safety and doing the greatest good for the greatest number according to the team's capabilities and training.

**NEED FOR CERT ORGANIZATION**

The specific CERT organizational structure now in use provides:

- Common terminology that contributes to effective communication and shared understanding.
- Effective communication among team members.

**CERT ORGANIZATION (CONTINUED)**

- A well-defined management structure (e.g., leadership, functional areas, reporting chain, working in teams).
- Accountability.

The CERT organization fulfills these requirements, and also has the advantage of:

- Common terminology that contributes to effective communication and shared understanding.
- Consolidated action plans that coordinate strategic goals, tactical objectives, and support activities.
- Comprehensive resource management that facilitates application of available resources to the right incident in a timely manner.
- A manageable span of control that provides for a desirable rescuer/supervisor ratio of between three and seven rescuers per supervisor.

**OBJECTIVES OF CERT ORGANIZATION**

In a disaster situation, CERT organization:

- Identifies the scope of the incident. (What is the problem?)
- Determines an overall strategy. (What can we do, and how will we do it?)
- Deploys teams and resources. (Who is going to do what?)
- Documents actions and results.

CERT organizational framework is flexible, so that it can expand or contract depending on the on-going assessment priorities determined by the IC, and people and resources available. This expansion and contraction helps ensure rescuer safety, doing the greatest good for the greatest number, manageable span of control and accountability of CERT members.

**CERT ORGANIZATION (CONTINUED)**

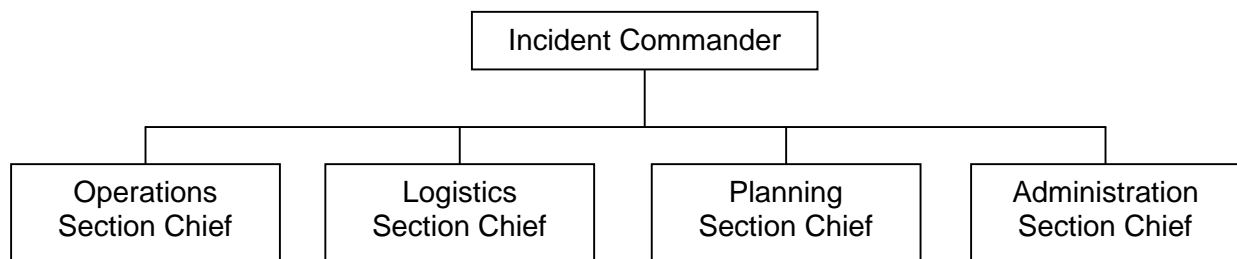
**INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM**

The Incident Command System (ICS) is the system used by fire and law enforcement agencies to manage emergency operations. When CERTs activate for their neighborhood or workplace they become part of that system. CERTs interrelate with ICS:

- CERTs are part of ICS.
- All CERTs, through their Incident Commanders, report to the first fire or law enforcement official at their location and take directions from that person until told that the command system has changed, or until relieved.

The basic ICS structure is established by the person who arrives first to the scene, who becomes the Incident Commander. Initially, the Incident Commander may handle all of the command positions shown in the visual, but as the incident evolves, may assign personnel as the:

- Operations Section Chief.
- Logistics Section Chief.
- Planning Section Chief.
- Administration Section Chief.



**ICS Command Function Organization Chart**

**ICS Command Function Organization Chart, showing the Incident Commander at the top and the four Section Chiefs (i.e., Operations, Logistics, Planning, and Admin) reporting to the Incident Commander.**

As the incident expands, it may be necessary to assign other personnel in each section to handle specific aspects of the response while maintaining an effective span of control.

**CERT ORGANIZATION (CONTINUED)****CERT STRUCTURE**

The following points about CERT structure are important:

- Each CERT must establish a command structure.
- A CERT Leader—or, in ICS terms, Incident Commander—is appointed to direct team activities. For CERT volunteer activities and training, this person may be appointed. However, during activation for a disaster, this person is the first to arrive at a pre-designated staging area.
- The location established by the CERT Leader as the central point for command and control of the incident is called the Command Post for the CERT. The IC stays in the command post. If the IC has to leave, the responsibility of IC must be delegated to someone in the command post.
- The CERT Leader may appoint members to assist with managing resources, services, and supplies (logistics). CERT Leaders may also appoint members to collect and display information (planning/intelligence) and collect and compile documentation. To maintain span of control, this delegation occurs as the organization expands.
- The CERT may operate as a single team that performs all activities as required, or may be divided into smaller teams (under Operations) of at least three people to achieve specific goals developed by the IC (e.g., fire suppression, medical, search and rescue), with a leader for each.
- In all situations, each unit assigned must have an identified leader to supervise tasks being performed to account for team members, and to report information to his or her designated leader.

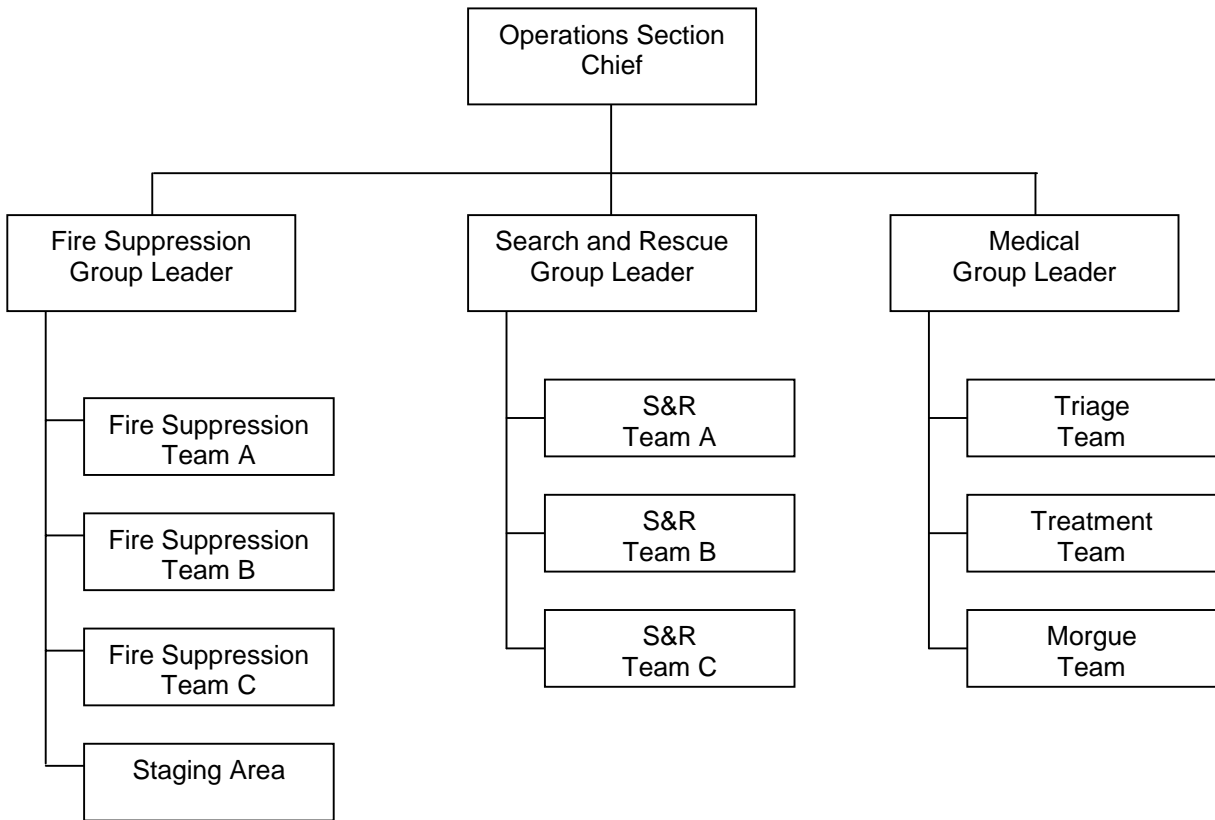
CERT personnel should always be assigned to teams consisting of at least three persons:

- One person will serve as a runner and communicate with the Command Post.
- Two people will “buddy up” to respond to the immediate needs.

The Logistics and Planning Sections may be expanded in the same way with:

- Logistics including Service and Support units.
- Planning including Situation and Status units.

**CERT ORGANIZATION (CONTINUED)**



**CERT Operations Section Structure**

**CERT Operations Section Structure, showing the Operations Section Chief at the top and the three Group Leaders underneath (Fire Suppression, Search and Rescue, and Medical). Reporting to the Fire Suppression Group Leader are all fire suppression teams and the Staging Area. Reporting to the Search and Rescue Team Leader are all search and rescue teams. Reporting to the Medical Group Leader are the Triage Team, the Treatment Team, and the Morgue Team.**

**CERT DECISIONMAKING****CERT MOBILIZATION**

CERT organization proceeds in the following way after an incident:

- Following the incident, CERT members take care of themselves, their families, their homes, and their neighbors.
- If the SOP calls for self-activation, CERT members proceed to the pre-designated staging area with their disaster supplies. Along the way, they make damage assessments that would be helpful for the CERT IC's decisionmaking.
- The first CERT member at the staging area becomes the initial IC for the response. As other CERT members arrive, the CERT IC may pass leadership to someone more qualified. Otherwise, the CERT IC develops the organization to ensure effective communication, to maintain span of control, maintain accountability, and do the greatest good for the greatest number without placing CERT members in harm's way.
- As intelligence is collected and assessed (from CERT members reporting to the staging area, emergency volunteers, and reports from working teams [e.g., search and rescue] by the planning function, the IC must prioritize actions and work with the Section Chiefs or leaders). The CERT organization is flexible and evolves based on new information.

Following an incident, information—and, therefore, priorities—may be changing rapidly. Communication between the IC and response teams ensures that CERTs do not overextend their resources or supplies.

**RESCUER SAFETY**

Effective emergency scene management requires the formulation and communication of strategic goals and tactical objectives that are based primarily on the safety of rescue personnel.

Rescuer safety is paramount. The question, "Is it safe for the CERT members to attempt the rescue?" is primary. The answer to this question is based mainly on the degree of damage to the structure.

**CERT DECISIONMAKING (CONTINUED)**

**CERT Rescue Efforts Based On Degree Of Damage**

Degree Of Damage	Should Rescue Be Attempted?
Heavy	No. Too dangerous to enter. Warn people to stay away.
Moderate	Yes, but perform only quick and safe removals; limit onsite medical care to checking for breathing, stopping major bleeding, and treating for shock. Minimize the number of rescuers inside the building.
Light	Yes. Locate, triage, and prioritize removal of victims to the designated treatment area.

**Strategies For Damaged Structures**

Light	Moderate	Heavy
<i>Superficial damage, broken windows, fallen plaster, major damage is to contents of building</i>	<i>Visible signs of minor structural damage; decorative work that is damaged or fallen; many visible cracks in plaster; building still attached to foundation; major damage is to contents of building</i>	<i>Partial or total collapse of walls and/or ceilings; obvious structural instability; tilting; off foundation; heavy smoke or fire; gas leaks; hazardous materials inside; rising or moving water</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secure building utilities (as needed).</li> <li>Establish and coordinate search and rescue teams with medical triage personnel.</li> <li>Establish "I" and "D" treatment areas.</li> <li><u>Primary Mission</u>: Locate, triage, and prioritize removal of victims to designated treatment area.</li> <li>Continue evacuation process until all victims have been removed and accounted for.</li> <li>Reassess structural stability and available resources for heavy rescue problems. Communicate and document location of trapped and/or missing persons to emergency personnel.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secure building utilities (gas, electrical, water).</li> <li>Gather information (victim locations).</li> <li>Establish control person at exit and entry points.</li> <li>Establish and coordinate two- to four-person rescue teams.</li> <li><u>Primary Mission</u>: Locate, stabilize, and immediately evacuate victims to a safe area while minimizing the number of rescuers inside the building.</li> <li>Perform triage and other medical care in a safe area.</li> <li>Continue rescuing lightly trapped victims until complete or no longer safe.</li> <li>Continue sizeup.</li> <li>Communicate and document the location of heavily trapped or deceased victims.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate the location and extent of damage to emergency services personnel.</li> <li>Secure building perimeter and warn untrained and well-intentioned volunteers about danger and entry into building.</li> <li>From the exterior of the building, attempt to shut off gas (if it is possible and safe to do so).</li> <li>Gather available information from survivors or witnesses for professional rescue teams.</li> </ol>

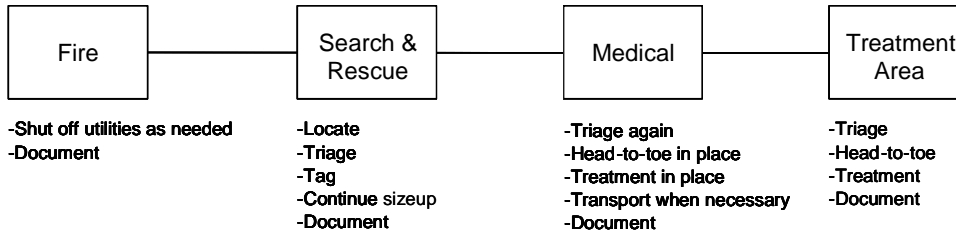
# COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM

## UNIT 6: CERT ORGANIZATION

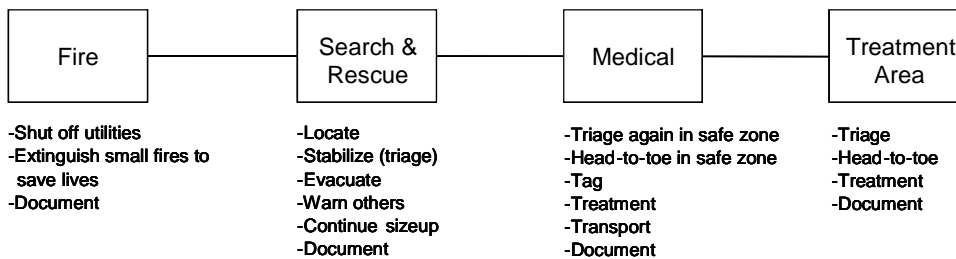
### CERT DECISIONMAKING (CONTINUED)

The extent of involvement for the various CERT functional teams varies depending on the level of damage encountered.

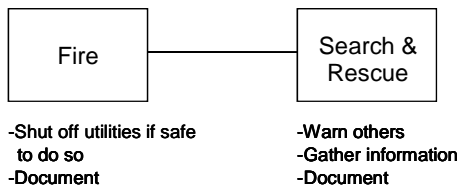
#### **Light Damage**



#### **Moderate Damage**



#### **Heavy Damage**



### Team Tasks Based On Damage Level

Tasks required of Fire, Search and Rescue, Medical, and Treatment Area teams based on the degree of damage to the structure.

### **DOCUMENTATION**

It is vital to document and communicate information about the disaster situation and resource status. Efficient flow of information makes it possible for resources to be deployed effectively and for professional emergency services to be applied appropriately.

Under the CERT organization, each level of authority has documentation responsibilities:

- Section Chiefs are responsible for providing the Command Post with ongoing information about damage assessment, group status, and ongoing needs.
- The Command Post is responsible for documenting the situation status, including:
  - Incident locations.
  - Access routes.
  - Identified hazards.
  - Support locations.

Note that support locations include the:

- Staging area.
- Medical treatment and triage area.
- Morgue, if there are fatalities.

This documentation must be provided to the first professional responders on the scene.

This information is vital for tracking the overall situation.

### **FORMS FOR DOCUMENTATION**

There are several standard forms that can be used to facilitate documentation and information flow.

**COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM**

**UNIT 6: CERT ORGANIZATION**

**Damage Assessment**

<b>Date:</b> 10/20/01	<b>Person Reporting:</b> Joe Montana	<b>Page #:</b> 1
<b>Time Received:</b> 9:50	<b>Person Receiving:</b> Jim Harkins	

Time	Location/Address	Burning	Out	Gas Leak	H2O Leak	Electric	Chemical	Damage*	Collapsed	Injured	Trapped	Dead	Access	No Access	Assignment Completed
		Fires	Hazards			Structures	People	Roads	/X						
9:45	13267 Magnolia				X	X		M							X

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Summary of all hazards in area - fill out this form on your way to Command Post and give it to Incident Command.  
 (\* for structure damage: h=heavy, m=moderate, l=light)  
 Incident Command: Choose an incident, put a slash in the assignment completed column, copy the address/location to the incident name section on Incident Briefing, and give Incident Briefing and Assignment Status to incident team leader. Copy address/location to Post-Incident Status and enter start time. When incident is complete, put a backslash in the assignment completed column and the incident end time on the Post-Incident Status form.

**COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM**

**UNIT 6: CERT ORGANIZATION**

**Personnel Resources**

<b>Date:</b> 10/20/01		<b>Person Reporting:</b> Mary Smith					<b>Page #:</b> 1		
Print Name and Time In			Skill Specialty Rank From 1-5 or Print "No"						
Name	Time In	Time Assigned	Fire	Medical	S&R	Transport	Document	Other	
Mary Smith	9:15	9:15						Personnel & Equipment Mgr.	
Jim Harkins	9:15	9:15						Incident Commander	
<del>Jerry Rice</del>	9:32	10:05	<del>X</del>	<del>2</del>	no	3	no		
Frank Thomas	9:35	10:00	2	3	<del>X</del>	4	no		
<del>J.J. Stokes</del>	9:43	10:05	<del>2</del>	<del>X</del>	4	3	no	radio	
Babe Ruth	9:45	10:00	3	2	<del>X</del>	4	5		
Steve Young	9:50	10:00	<del>X</del>	<del>2</del>	3	4	5		
Mark McGwire	9:50	10:00	1	no	<del>2</del>	3	no		
Willie Mays	9:50	10:00	2	3	<del>X</del>	4	5		
<del>Joe Montana</del>	9:52	10:05	<del>X</del>	<del>2</del>	4	5	3		
Lou Gehrig	9:55	10:00	1	no	<del>2</del>	3	no		
Serena Williams	9:58	10:03	1	2	3	no	<del>X</del>	heavy equipment	
Sammy Sosa	10:03	10:03	3	2	1	5	4	to Treatment Area	
Leah Malot	10:11		2	3	1	4	5	catering truck	
Gete Wami	10:19		1	3	2	5	4		
Jerry Rice	12:00		2	1	4	3	no	radio	

FOR USE BY LOGISTICS AND STAGING

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Have people sign in and mark their special skills. When you assign someone to a team, circle that team's box next to their name and enter the time assigned. When someone returns from an assignment, draw a line through their name and all boxes and have the person sign in again. Remember to check how long people have been assigned and who hasn't been assigned yet.

**COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM**

**UNIT 6: CERT ORGANIZATION**

**Equipment Resources**

<b>Date:</b> 10/20/01	<b>Person Reporting:</b> Mary Smith	<b>Page #:</b> 1
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		Fire Extinguisher	Wrench	Flashlight	First Aid Kit	Blankets	Stretchers				
<b>Time:</b>	<b>Loaned To:</b>										
9:15		+4	+6	+7	+2	+1	2				
10:05	to Willie Mays			-2							
10:05	to Frank Thomas		-1	-2							
10:06	to Joe Montana	-2		-1	-1	-2	-1				
10:10	Balance	2	5	2	1	8					
10:55	from Joe Montana	+2		+1	+1		+1				
11:00	Balance	4	5	3	2	8	1				

Enter equipment and supplies as they come in and out. Total periodically.  
 If an item is returned empty (for instance, a fire extinguisher), add it back in and circle the number, so you don't include it in your next total.

COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM

UNIT 6: CERT ORGANIZATION

Incident Briefing

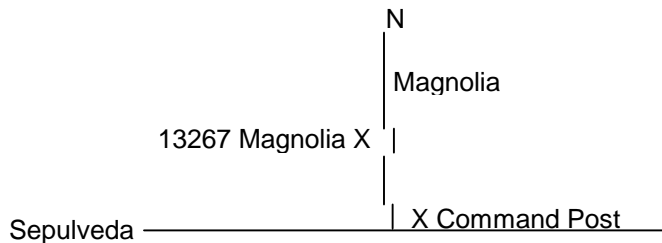
Prepared By: Jim Harkins

Date: 10/20/01

Time: 9:50

Incident Name: 13267 Magnolia

Map Sketch:



Current Organization:

Incident Commander: Jim Harkins

Battalion: 8

Summary of Current Actions

***Be aware of hazards! Work as a team!***

Gas, electricity, water shut off.

Found and removed 6 victims.  
1 dead inside.

Treated 1 minor, 3 delayed and 2 immediate.

Transported 6 victims to treatment area,  
then transported 3 victims to Kaiser Hospital.

FOR INCIDENT COMMANDER

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Incident Command: Transfer an incident from Damage Assessment sheet. Sketch a map of the incident area, if known, with any hazards. Enter Incident Commander's name and Battalion number under current organization. Give to incident team leader with Assignment Status sheet.

Incident team leader: Sketch a map of the incident area with any hazards, if not done by Incident Command. Summarize the actions of your teams. When incident is complete, return this form, along with Assignment Status, to Incident Command.

**COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM**

**UNIT 6: CERT ORGANIZATION**

**Message Form**

<b>To:</b> Logistics	<b>Message Center Use Only</b> Incident: <u>13267 Magnolia</u> Time: _____ Date: <u>10/20/01</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Incoming <input type="checkbox"/> Outgoing
<b>From:</b> S&R 1	
<b>Time:</b> 10:40	
<b>Message Text:</b>	
Found one person trapped.	
Need 2 prybars and enough cribbing for 2 supports, each 2 feet high	
<b>Action Taken:</b>	
Running short of cribbing.	
Am sending 2 prybars and 18" of cribbing, procuring more	

USE CLEAR CONCISE TEXT

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Examples: assignment completed, additional resources needed, unable to complete, special information/status update.



Date: 10/20/01		Person Reporting: Rich Richins		Page #:	
Time In:	Name or Descriptio	Triage Tag	Condition	Moved To:	Time Out
10:19	Rich Richins	D	Minor cut on forehead		
10:35	White male, about 45 years, balding, overweight	I	Deep cut on right thigh, unconscious, shock		
10:52	Willard Scott	D	Broken left arm, swollen left ankle	Kaiser	12:08
11:15	White female, blond, late 20's, pregnant	I	Unconscious, shallow breathing, shock	Kaiser	12:08
11:20	White female, 60s, "Annie"	I	Disoriented, large bump on forehead, shock	Kaiser	12:08
11:47	Jill Johns	D	Minor cuts and bruises, shock		

FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT AREA

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Document each person brought to the treatment area.

If Victim Cannot Give Name, Write a Brief Description (e.g., Sex, Approximate Age, Hair Color, Race, etc).

Tag color: red=Immediate, yellow=Delayed, green=Minor, Black=Dead

Victim Treatment Area Record

COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM  
UNIT 6: CERT ORGANIZATION

**DOCUMENTATION (CONTINUED)**

**Forms Used For Response Documentation**

<b>Form</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Damage Assessment Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Completed by CERT leaders. Provides a summary of overall hazards in selected areas, including:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fires.</li> <li>• Utility hazards.</li> <li>• Structural damage.</li> <li>• Injuries and casualties.</li> <li>• Available access.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Essential for prioritizing and formulating action plans.</li> </ul>
Personnel Resources Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Completed by CERT members as they arrive at the Staging Area. Provides information about:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is on site.</li> <li>• When they arrived.</li> <li>• When they were assigned.</li> <li>• Their special skills.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Used by Staging personnel to track personnel availability.</li> </ul>
Equipment Resources Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Completed by Logistics and Staging Area personnel to track the loan of equipment to CERT members.</li> </ul>
Incident Briefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Completed by the Incident Commander (Team Leader) to identify damage, known hazards, and actions taken.</li> </ul>
Message Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Used for sending messages between command levels and groups. Messages should be clear and concise and should focus on such key issues as:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assignment completion.</li> <li>• Additional resources required.</li> <li>• Special information.</li> <li>• Status update.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Incident Status Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Used by the command post for keeping abreast of situation status. Contains essential information for tracking personnel assignments.</li> </ul>
Victim Treatment Area Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Completed by Medical Treatment Area personnel to record victims entering the treatment area, their condition, and their status.</li> </ul>

**DOCUMENTATION (CONTINUED)****ACTIVITY: ICS FUNCTIONS****Instructions:**

Using your knowledge about the five ICS functions, decide under which function the following activities would fall. Some activities may involve more than one function to be completed.

Use the following key to fill in the blanks before each activity:

IC = Incident Commander

O = Operations

P = Planning

L = Logistics

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. It's dark, all the lights are out, you need additional flashlights to continue your response.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The designated first aid site has a downed power line.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 3. A neighbor reports the smell of gas in his house, but he cannot shut off the gas at the meter.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The batteries for the portable radio are dead.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The City wants to know the overall status of your neighborhood.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Several of your neighbors have minor injuries and need first aid.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Fire from another neighborhood is moving toward your neighborhood.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 8. There is a pit bull-type dog seen wandering near the first aid station.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 9. A news crew has arrived with a camera to film your activities.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Two hysterical neighbors are demanding help. One cannot find her adolescent child who was playing outside when the disaster struck. The other wants help moving a bookcase off of his wife. He says she's bleeding from a wound on the head.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 11. It's starting to rain. Your command post and the first aid area are not under shelter.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Too many people are coming to the Incident Commander to ask questions. The IC asks for someone to act as a "gatekeeper."
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 13. There is a great increase of car and foot traffic through your neighborhood because other roadways are blocked.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 14. The Incident Commander is very tired and is going to hand over responsibilities to someone else. She wants a report on the status of the neighborhood before doing so.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Many neighborhood residents have come to volunteer their help.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 16. Reports have come in of damage and injuries in the next block. Teams must be assigned to assess the situation.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ 17. A professional responder has arrived at the scene and would like a briefing on situation status.
-

**TABLETOP EXERCISE**

**Purpose:** This exercise is an interactive tabletop activity that gives you an opportunity to apply what you have learned about team organization.

**Instructions:** To complete this exercise, follow these steps:

1. Work in your table group.
2. Read the scenario distributed by the Instructor.

Remember that CERT command objectives are to:

- Identify the scope of the incident.
  - Determine an overall CERT strategy.
  - Set priorities and deploy resources.
3. You will have 30 minutes to complete the exercise.
-

**UNIT SUMMARY**

The ICS concept has proven emergency in disaster response. ICS provides a flexible means of controlling personnel, facilities, equipment, and communication and can be expanded as necessary. Its principles are used as the basis of the CERT organization.

The key question that CERT leaders must always ask is: *“Is it safe for CERT members to attempt the rescue?”* Whether or not to attempt a rescue depends on the degree of damage to the structure involved.

It is vital to document and communicate information about situation and resource status to all CERT levels.

- Response teams and their functional groups must provide the command post with ongoing information about damage assessment, group status, and ongoing needs.
  - The command post must document the situation status so that the overall disaster situation can be tracked.
-