

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program

Georgia communities remain vulnerable to natural, technological, and human-caused incidents including hurricanes, tornadoes, severe storms, wildfires, hazardous material incidents, terrorism and trans-national criminal threats. In many jurisdictions, especially rural areas, professional emergency services are limited and may be overwhelmed during a major event.

Currently, Georgia lacks sufficient numbers of trained community volunteers to provide organized, safe, and effective support to first responders. Untrained spontaneous volunteers often emerge during disasters but without direction or safety knowledge, creating challenges rather than solutions. There is a clear capability gap in community-level disaster preparedness, response support, and resilience-building.

The absence of structured, trained volunteer capacity delays life-saving efforts, prolongs recovery, and increases risk to both responders and the public. Without CERT teams integrated into county emergency management frameworks, communities lack a scalable, deployable volunteer force to assist with sheltering, distribution, search and rescue, disaster medical support, and public safety outreach.

By establishing and sustaining CERT programs statewide, Georgia will:

- Expand the pool of trained volunteers ready to respond to disasters.
- Enhance coordination between residents and local response agencies.
- Improve resilience and reduce reliance on already stretched professional responders.
- Provide surge capacity during mass care operations, evacuation support, and disaster recovery.

The (applicant CERT Team complete name) CERT was formed in (YEAR) and is sponsored by (NAME of Sponsoring Agency). (Applicant CERT Team complete name) has (NUMBER) active members, serving (NAME of COMMUNITY). **Describe the community to be served in detail**

The CERT Program will deliver the following outcomes: (select from below)

- Establishment of new CERT teams.
- Sustainment and expansion of existing CERT teams through refresher training and equipment support.
- A trained, credentialed, and deployable statewide volunteer force capable of assisting local emergency management.
- Integration of CERT volunteers into county emergency operations plans and statewide disaster exercises.
- Strengthened community resilience and public trust in local emergency preparedness.

Funding is requested for the following categories: (select from below)

- Training Delivery: Instructor fees, course materials, and facility support for CERT Basic Training and specialized modules.
- Volunteer Equipment & PPE: Starter kits, safety vests, helmets, gloves, medical kits, flashlights, and identification for deployment.
- Recruitment & Outreach: Printing, digital engagement, and community awareness campaigns to increase CERT participation.
- Exercise Participation: Support for CERT involvement in local, regional, and statewide drills, including evaluation and improvement planning.
- Program Coordination: Administrative support for GEMA/HS to manage and sustain statewide CERT program development.

This investment directly supports DHS/FEMA's SHSGP National Priorities:

- Enhancing Community Resilience: By training and equipping local citizens to act as force multipliers in emergencies.
- Expanding State and Local Capabilities: CERT provides scalable volunteer resources to fill response gaps.
- Strengthening Partnerships: CERT fosters collaboration between residents, local governments, and first responders.
- Supporting the National Preparedness Goal Core Capabilities: Community Resilience, Operational Coordination, Mass Care Services, and Public Information and Warning.