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This newsletter is being sent out to help you stay in the loop and updated on what is happening with CERT in our community. If you have any suggestions for content please contact one of us [your CERT Team Leaders].

WE HOPE YOU FIND THIS NEWSLETTER AND INFORMATION HELPFUL!

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January Natural Gas Shortage

Many Wahpeton-Breckenridge residents remember being asked to reduce their home's thermostat setting to 60 degrees on Sunday, January 26, but most are unaware of how close the Twin Towns really came to experiencing a major problem that weekend.

The previous day, fire had engulfed a major natural gas pipeline in Canada, greatly reducing the amount of natural gas available to service eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota. This generated real concern that natural gas users in Wahpeton-Breckenridge might experience an interruption of service. A gas service interruption of this nature would have left thousands of area residents without the ability to heat their homes and businesses, or use any gas-fired appliances for up to several days. The fact that we were experiencing severe cold weather and a winter storm at the time greatly compounded potential problems and necessitated an immediate emergency response.

As a result, approximately 20 local officials met at Wahpeton's City Hall that Sunday and began preparations for responding to a

worst case scenario, which would have involved sheltering and feeding several thousand people until natural gas service could be restored, and all gas-fired devices checked by qualified technicians prior to being restarted.

One precautionary step taken that afternoon was to notify Richland-Wahpeton CERT Team Leaders of the possibility of CERT being activated in order to assist with shelter management, as was done during the Industrial Plating fire that occurred on February 18, 2008. The number of shelters required for an incident of this magnitude would likely have resulted in CERT playing a significant role in reaching a successful conclusion.

Thankfully, natural gas service was not interrupted that weekend and CERT did not have to be activated — but if things had gone differently, CERT team members would have been asked to help with making a bad situation more manageable.

- Scott Thorsteinson

March CERT Training

This year we tried a new format for CERT training. In order to shorten the amount of time participants spent in the classroom, we added an online component.

Participants were required to complete online lessons before each session, allowing class time to be used for reinforcement of important points and more hands-on activities. This allowed us to complete the course in twelve hours of classroom time, and four sessions instead of five.

We also added two new instructors: Heather Goroski for Disaster Preparedness and Clint Gilbertson for Fire Safety and Utility Control. Since Clint is a member of the Wahpeton Fire Department, we used their fire safety trailer for our fire training. It was lots of fun trying to put out a simulated fire with a simulated fire extinguisher.

Nineteen participants took the CERT training with fifteen completing the entire course. In addition, three current CERT volunteers reinforced their



Practicing the blanket carry

training by attending portions of the course. Those who completed the training are Jill Boucher, Josh Deike, Teresa Gwynn, Patti Hansen, Cleo Hasse, Laura Heitke, Tim Jirak, Allyson Johansen, Brigid Langseth, Jason Lofberg, Darral Nordick, Matt Schuster, Jake Thiel, Patrick Thorsteinson, and Thomas Webb.

Thank you to the trainers and participants for making this a great training!

- Penny Seifert

Did You Know?

Did you know that teachers may be eligible for Continuing Education credits just by taking a CERT class? Please pass this information along to your teacher acquaintances. If they are interested in more information, ask them to call:

Penny Seifert, CERT Coordinator
pennyann@wah.midco.net 701-642-2392



Upcoming Training Events

- ◆ Are you interested in brushing up your skills learned in CERT Training? Training is available at: <http://www.citizencorps.fema.gov/cert/IS317/>.
- ◆ Another way to brush up on your skills is to sit in on a current running CERT course. Please contact Penny Seifert if you are interested.
- ◆ CPR and First Aid Training—Please contact Penny Seifert if you are interested.

Good Samaritan Laws

Good Samaritan laws offer legal protection to people who give reasonable assistance to those who are injured, ill, in peril or otherwise incapacitated. Protection offered by Good Samaritan laws is intended to reduce bystanders' hesitation to assist, for fear of being sued or prosecuted for unintentional injury or wrongful death.

Good Samaritan laws vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Below are links for both North Dakota and

Minnesota laws:

- North Dakota: <http://www.legis.nd.gov/cencode/t32c03-1.pdf?20140504173219>
- Minnesota: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=604a.01>

Always remember that as a CERT volunteer, you are to dial 911 first. And if you are wearing your CERT vest and/or hardhat, you should never exceed your CERT training.

Caller ID and CodeRED

Have you been a victim of one of those spam calls that have been going around? Most of us have learned not to answer our cell phones when we don't recognize the number. The only problem is that you may miss a CodeRED call.

Jill Breuer, Richland County Communications/911 Manager recommends that you put these numbers in your cell phone so you will know the call is emergency related:

- 866-419-5000, Emergency Communications – for emergency notifications other than weather
- 855-969-4636, ECN Community – for general notifications
- 800-566-9780, Emergency CodeRED weather warnings

If you'd like to hear the last message delivered to your phone, simply dial the number back.

We Need Your Help!!

Please help us out. We are looking for volunteers to submit short pieces about themselves for the CERT Newsletter. We take our training in small groups, and do not get to know CERT members from other classes – at least not in the CERT context. And it is difficult to get our CERT volunteers together. We are trying to “introduce” volunteers to each other through short bios in our quarterly newsletters.

These bios can be simple – just tell us something about yourself. For example, tell us about what you do for a living or what you do in your free time. Have you used your CERT training in any way? Or do you have

a suggestion for other CERT volunteers? Don't be shy. We know you all have something very interesting to say!

Please send your bio to Heather at heather.goroski@gmail.com or Penny at pennyann@wah.midco.net. We will try to include a couple of bios in each newsletter.

Past issues of the newsletter can be found under the “CERT” tab on the City of Wahpeton web site at <http://www.wahpeton.com>.

- Your CERT Team Leaders

New CERT Standard Operating Guidelines

In February the Richland County Citizen Corp Council approved new Standard Operating Guidelines for Richland County CERT volunteers.

The new guidelines were developed to give you more detailed information about how CERT volunteers would be deployed, and how you should conduct yourself in an emergency. This was all covered during your training, so it is really just a refresher. We recommend that you read through the guidelines below, and maybe print them out and keep them with your CERT backpack.

We expanded the portion of the guidelines concerning deployment. Most likely you will be notified of deployments by a CERT CodeRED call. At that time, you will be told

where to report. We want to stress **that you are to take care of yourself, your family, your neighborhood, and then your community – in that order.** You should never feel compelled to respond to any deployment.

In the event that emergency resources are overwhelmed and CERT volunteers self-activate, the first person on the scene is designated as the leader. If that person is uncomfortable in the position, another CERT volunteer may take over.

If you have any questions about the new guidelines, feel free to contact one of us.

- Your CERT Team Leaders

Richland County Community Emergency Response Team Standard Operating Guidelines



Mission: To make the Richland County, North Dakota area safer and stronger and provide opportunities for individuals to be better prepared for emergency/disaster situations.

Purpose: To establish procedures for the activation, notification, coordination, capabilities, and responsibilities of Richland County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members.

General Instructions: The Richland County CERT program emphasizes a neighbor helping neighbor approach, with training and program maintenance directed through the Richland County Citizen Corp Council. CERT members can be deployed for any type of major incident to include but not be limited to natural disasters, technological hazards, and man-made or terrorist incidents.

Activation: Self Activation: Neighbor helping neighbor

Community Activation: Provide support to emergency response agencies as needed

- When disaster occurs, your first responsibility is to ensure your own safety and the safety of your family. After, you can join other CERT members as directed by emergency services. No one should ever feel they are required to activate if, for whatever reason, they are uncomfortable doing so.
- In the event the emergency services within the communities are overwhelmed and/or it is deemed necessary by emergency personnel, CERT teams are designed to take immediate action and provide care and support throughout their immediate area. Members of CERT are trained to self-activate in their neighborhoods/communities and work as a team while conducting operations until emergency services crews can gain access to and stabilize the situation.
- 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 and diligence when responding or reporting, as directed, to emergencies.
- CERT members should be advised of the nature of the emergency, the number of CERT members needed, and the staging location for operations when assisting emergency response agencies.
- CERT members should bring or wear their personal safety equipment: helmet (no baseball hats), vest, dust mask, goggles, gloves (rubber/latex and leather), sturdy shoes, long pants, flashlight (with extra batteries), bottled water, and non-perishable food. Bring any other items you feel appropriate. Absolutely no shorts, sandals or open-toed shoes are allowed.
- CERT members should conduct themselves with professionalism, dignity, and pride, be sensitive to the diversity of team members and those we assist, and act appropriately and responsibly at all times while assisting others.

Notification: Members will be notified via the CERT CodeRED system, by phone or text message, or by email of developing situations in their neighborhoods or communities that may require their services or activation. Email notices will include "CERT Activation" in the subject line. Other communication media used may include but is not limited to: AM/FM radio, weather band, and/or short wave/amateur radio, television, or telephone.

Richland County Community Emergency Response Team Standard Operating Guidelines (Cont.)

Coordination:

- Self-activated CERT members must coordinate their efforts until emergency response agencies arrive and provide direction and leadership.
- Community activated CERT members will be directed by the emergency response agencies, whether on-scene or through available communications. CERT members are only authorized to respond to community emergencies as directed by local emergency response agencies.
- Activities of CERT members should be relayed frequently to the on-scene emergency response agencies.
- The standard meeting place will be the northeast door of the Wahpeton Law Enforcement Center on 4th Street and 3rd Avenue North.
- In the event of a catastrophic disaster which results in the temporary loss of communications, all available CERT members are to report to the standard meeting place and await further instructions.

Capabilities:

- CERT volunteers are trained to perform the following operations: light search and rescue, fire extinguishment on small or controllable fires, basic triage of trauma victims, and establishing safe evacuation areas.
- CERT volunteers are trained to assist local emergency response agencies as directed. Stay within the scope of your training. You have been trained under the curriculum of FEMA's Community Emergency Response Team program. Confine your actions to those guidelines and stay within the scope of your CERT training and certification.
- Confine your actions to your physical and resource limitations when responding as a member of CERT. Such limitations may be determined by, but not limited to, equipment available, physical abilities, knowledge, authority, and hazards.

Responsibilities: CERT members must comply with the requirements of CERT training, as well as complying with all federal, state and local laws when functioning as a CERT member. These requirements are established through the CERT curriculum and the Richland County Citizen Corp Council and include but are not limited to: satisfactorily completing a verified CERT instruction course; completing all required forms; and maintaining competencies by attending future CERT education sessions/meetings.

Conduct: You represent the CERT program to new members, to the public, and to those to whom we render our services. It is important to portray a positive image. As a volunteer with the Richland County CERT program, you are expected to comply with the following:

- Dial 911 for all emergencies, first.
- Know that you are not trained to function as emergency services personnel, but as an extension of emergency services personnel during catastrophic disasters, when such circumstances exist, or when directed by emergency services officials.
- Conduct yourself with professionalism, dignity, and pride, and act appropriately and responsibly at all times while assisting others.
- Treat fellow team members, visitors, other volunteer program participants, guests, and property with respect and courtesy.
- Be sensitive to the diversity of team members and those we assist.
- Direct the media or anyone who is looking for information to the incident commander or public information officer. Do not share information about the incident with anyone other than fellow CERT volunteers and emergency personnel.
- Respect the privacy of persons served by CERT, and hold, in confidence, all sensitive, private, and personal information.
- Keep leadership informed of any progress, concerns, or problems with tasks which you have been assigned.
- Partake of no alcohol while responding as CERT and do not report for duty while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- You are forbidden to carry guns, knives, sticks, or other weapons. (You may have multi-purpose tools, pliers, screwdrivers, wrenches, etc.) You have been trained for immediate disaster response and there is no need, place, or legal authorization for you to carry or use any of the above.
- You shall not authorize the use of, or use for the benefit or advantage of any person, the name, emblem, endorsement, services or property of the Richland County CERT program without the approval of the Richland County Citizens Corps Council.
- You shall not accept, or seek on behalf of any other person, any money or gifts offered as a result of your affiliation with Richland County CERT.
- You shall not use your participation in CERT to promote any partisan politics, religious matters, or positions on any issue.
- You shall avoid inappropriate conduct, both on- and off-duty, that would jeopardize program effectiveness. Such behavior includes, but is not limited to, the following: offensive or profane language or gestures; public criticism of a CERT team member, its leaders or the CERT program; or jeopardize another team member's safety.

All violations will be thoroughly investigated by a member or members of Richland County Citizen Corps Council. During the investigation process, involved CERT members will be temporarily suspended from all CERT activities, pending the outcome of the investigation. Said members will be notified as to their status with the CERT program by the Richland County Citizen Corps Council. Discipline includes, but is not limited to, counseling, written notice, and restriction of involvement with the Richland County CERT program.

Richland County CERT is committed to a policy of fair representation and will not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, age, disability, gender, color, religion, sexual orientation, geography, or group affiliation. Volunteers will adhere to these same standards in the course of their duties.

Effective Date: February 12, 2014

Proposed changes to this policy should be brought to the attention of the **Richland County Citizen Corp Council**