

## **Minneapolis Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Proposal to Seek Corporate/Business Donations**

### **Background**

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) was introduced in Minneapolis in 2002. As of April 2007, 450 CERT Team Members have been trained with a substantial presence in the Downtown business community as well as trained citizens distributed throughout most of the Minneapolis Neighborhoods.

As conceived by FEMA, CERT is an inherently local, neighborhood-based resource. The Minneapolis CERT model is organized according to existing, well-defined geographic neighborhoods. Currently in Minneapolis there are five neighborhood-based teams; ten members are needed to establish a team. The goal is to develop at least one CERT team per Minneapolis neighborhood. Each team is expected to partner with the existing, city-recognized (and city-funded) neighborhood associations.

The Fire Department hired a CERT Coordinator in July of 2006. The coordinator has elevated the CERT Program to the next level with:

- an increase in the number of trainings offered annually to a minimum of:
  - five Neighborhood CERT classes
  - two Business CERT classes
  - quarterly refresher classes
  - at least two advanced or enhanced CERT classes
- outreach to Neighborhood Associations
  - presentations at Neighborhood meetings
  - information booths at Neighborhood and City events
- CERT participation with Minneapolis Emergency Preparedness committees
- active Minneapolis representation on the State Citizen Corps Council and Grant Advisory Committee

Minneapolis CERT is rapidly becoming a key emergency management resource for the City. 450 citizens have voluntarily committed their time and energy to becoming prepared for emergencies in their home and community. The CERT Program has become a very valuable volunteer resource base for Minneapolis. It is impossible to accurately measure the value of volunteers, but the hourly rate given to volunteers in 2005 is \$18.04/hour. The value these trained volunteers

will bring to the City in the event of a disaster is impossible to calculate. CERT Team Members also promote the important message of preparedness with their neighbors and co-workers throughout the course of their every day activities.

CERT's value has been recognized at both the national and local level. FEMA tapped CERT resources in both 2005 and 2006 to augment its national response capacity. It is actively working on a policy to institutionalize this practice. Minneapolis CERT members will be called upon to staff in-take sites for the Snowball Three Pandemic Influenza Exercise, throughout the metro area. City Emergency Preparedness Staff are considering ways that CERT Team Members will be able to assist in a Pandemic situation, if an evacuation is ever necessary and with the Republican National Convention.

### **Issues**

Minneapolis CERT Team members are seeking support from the City in the form of additional training, team development, neighborhood recruitment, exercises to practice skills and equipment resources. Although the value of citizen preparedness far outweighs the costs associated with maintaining and expanding the program, funds are necessary to reach established goals.

The CERT Training is being offered free of charge to all Minneapolis residents and businesses. Training and basic safety response equipment costs are approximately \$200 per participant. The training facility is provided free of charge by the Minneapolis Fire Department. Most of the training is being provided by off duty Minneapolis fire fighters.

Because City funding and Federal Grant funds are limited and becoming increasingly competitive; Fire Department is requesting approval to seek corporate/business donations for CERT equipment and training and management related costs. The first corporations/businesses that will be contacted are those that have taken advantage of the CERT training for their staff.

A corporation from the city of Plymouth has asked for CERT training. We are also requesting approval to seek donations from corporations and businesses located immediately outside of the Minneapolis boundaries, who are interested in the program and have requested training.

### **Requested City Council Action**

The action being requested of the City Council is to authorize Minneapolis CERT and Emergency Management staff to seek donations from corporations to assist with the financial support of the Minneapolis Community Emergency Response Team.