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## The Ten CERTmandments

by Earle Hartling, CERT Training and Education Manager, Culver City, CA

This article is reprinted with permission. It originally appeared in the Winter 2005 (Volume 7, Issue 1) edition of The Connection online newsletter for emergency preparedness. You can find the current edition of The Connection at <http://www.naem.com/connection.html>.

When I took over as the civilian training manager for our local CERT in Culver City, CA, I tried to find a way to convey the "feel" of emergency response to both new students and past graduates. What resulted was what I call "The Ten CERTmandments" (my apologies to both believers and nonbelievers). They do not contain any real "technical" details regarding the CERT skills to be learned, but rather they are more "philosophical" ways of approaching all of the different aspects of emergency response. They help students remember how they should deal any emergency situation, so that they can be as safe and effective as possible in performing their rescue duties. But they are more than just means to an end; they should be considered as inviolate as the original Commandments and they must be strictly adhered to during any kind of emergency.

1. Thou shalt always keep thine own self safe: This may be one of the few times when "looking out for No. 1" is socially acceptable. In fact, this rule must be followed in every, single thing we do in CERT. You, as an emergency responder, are CERT's most important resource following a disaster. Not your fire extinguisher, not the CERTmobile...YOU. And if you don't do everything in your power to keep yourself safe and functioning (for example, not running into burning buildings or picking up and carrying victims covered in hazardous materials), you run the risk of becoming a victim yourself, going from an "asset" to a "liability." Then, you're

not only lost to the emergency response effort, but already scarce resources now have to be diverted to take care of you!

2. Thou shalt do the most good for the most people: It's a sad and tragic, but unavoidable, fact that, in a major disaster, we just won't be able to save everybody. We can only try to help as many people as we possibly can. And that may mean having to leave someone who is too far gone (euphemistically referred to as "unsalvageable") or who would take too much time and too many people to save. That's one reason why CPR isn't part of the CERT curriculum; while taking the time to resuscitate one person, we could lose the chance to save many more. This may be the toughest of all the CERTmandments to accept.

3. Thou shalt walk, not run: Of course, after disaster strikes, there will be people that need help...fast! But while we need to assist people in a timely fashion, it is neither safe (see the First CERTmandment) nor efficient to rush right into any situation without a proper "size-up." Before entering a building to perform search and rescue, we first walk around the building (Is it on fire? Do the utilities need to be shut off? Are there any hazards? Is the building going to fall down any minute?). Before treating patients, we first do a "head-to-toe" assessment (Am I treating a broken arm, when my patient is actually going into shock?). Figuring out beforehand what needs to be done and how will not only save time in the long run, but will also save lives, possibly even your own.

4. Thou shalt never go it alone: This is very simple—always have a buddy with you! Whether

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# THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR THE JOB

by Kimberly Lorentzen, KPCC Coordinator

Most of us have learned from experience that it's hard to do a job without the right tools. You can improvise, but for some tools, there just are no substitutes. That's why those of you who have already received your Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) certification are getting additional equipment for your CERT kit. Your personal safety is the number one priority when it comes to emergency or disaster response, so you'll notice that many of the items in your CERT kit are personal protection equipment (PPE).

You should have already received a hardhat, a pair of leather work gloves, a pair of safety glasses and a reflective safety vest. The new additions to your kit are a winter liner for your hardhat, a set of triage tape (red, green and black), a flashlight with batteries, a marking crayon for search-and-rescue, a crescent wrench to shut off utilities, 2 dust masks, and a CERT duffle bag to keep it all together. If you've already finished the CERT course and earned your certificate but have not yet received all the equipment in this list, please contact me as soon as possible.

Other new items all CERT course graduates should have received by now are the Kenai Peninsula CERT t-shirt and the CERT quick reference card. The t-shirt is for any occasion when you participate in a community disaster preparedness campaign, but is yours to keep and wear whenever you like.

The CERT quick reference card folds up to the size of a business card and is full of reminders about how and when to use a fire extinguisher, what marks to use on a building you've searched, how to read hazmat signs, and basic triage procedures. You might want to keep this card in your

wallet or CERT bag – anywhere you have quick access to it in an emergency.

Your green CERT PPE gear helps to signal police, fire and EMS personnel that you are a trained volunteer available to help in an emergency. Think about where you should keep your kit for quick and easy access: the trunk of your car, in your office, etc. You might also want to consider adding to your bag. I've added a CPR mask, vinyl gloves and a biohazard waste bag to mine. Other good additions might be a roll of duct tape, first aid supplies, bottled water, some non-perishable food, and a small fire extinguisher. Add anything you think you need so that you have the right tools for the job. ■



## The Ten CERTmandments

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its fighting a small fire, searching a building or even acting as Incident Commander, no one in CERT should ever attempt any operation without having another CERT member backing him or her up. You'll need that extra pair of eyes to watch out for hazards, that extra pair of hands to help you extract a victim, that extra mind to help figure out the best course of action, and, of course, that extra pair of feet to go for help if you get stuck somewhere! But, perhaps more importantly, you'll get the enormous psychological boost from just having another person with you so you won't feel so alone in what could be a tremendously stressful situation.

5. Thou shalt know thine own limitations: Despite the valuable CERT training we've all received, we are still neither professional rescuers nor superheroes. There will be things that come up during an emergency that we're just not capable of handling, and we will have to recognize and accept these limitations so that we can be true to the First CERTmandment (thou shalt keep thine own self safe). This goes for any and all limitations, whether they are due to equipment (your extinguisher is too small to put out a particular fire), training (a victim needs a tracheotomy) or physical (you're on a rescue team for victim extraction but you've got a bad back). Regardless of the cause, you must keep yourself and your buddy safe and pass this information up the chain

of command, so that the proper resources can be dispatched. And don't be discouraged if you have some physical limitation (bum knee, fainting at the sight of blood) prevents you from doing each and every job CERT might be called on to do. Rest assured that in a full-scale disaster, there would be more than enough opportunities to help out in any number of capacities, regardless of your level of training or physical condition. Every CERT member has a place in the organization.

6. Thou shalt always stay up, up and away: This has nothing to do with the 1960's Fifth Dimension hit song or what Superman says when leaping tall buildings. Rather, it has more to do with the real estate agents' credo: location, location, location. Specifically, it refers to staying UPhill, UPwind and AWAY from hazards when setting up your CERT operations, such as the treatment area, staging area or command post. You want to stay uphill so that your operations area isn't either inundated with flood waters or contaminated by leaking HAZMAT containers. You want to stay upwind so that toxic fumes or smoke doesn't blow back into your faces. And you want to stay far enough away so as not to be caught up in an unexpected explosion or building collapse. (A tragic example of the latter case occurred on Sept. 11, 2001, when the N.Y. Fire Department set up their Command Post in the lobby of the World Trade Center.) In short, always locate your operations where they cannot be adversely impacted by the emergency you're handling.

7. Thou shalt always follow directions from above: We're not talking about heavenly commands from the Almighty here. The CERT emergency response to a disaster is an organized team effort. It all starts with one person taking charge, developing a plan of action, delegating responsibilities, creating teams to handle specific functions and handing out assignments, all of which is performed through a "chain of command." Since there is no such thing as "busy work" in a disaster, every job that every team is given is critical to the success of the incident response plan, whether it's fire suppression, triage, radio communication, scribe or whatever. If an individual or a team decides that it just doesn't want to perform its assigned task, they can risk not only the success of the response, but also, quite possibly, the very safety of the responders. Therefore, each person on each team must either complete the assigned task, or else notify their supervisor (right on up to the incident commander) why the job can't be done (too dangerous, not enough resources, etc.). That way, if an assigned task isn't done, whoever's in charge can make the appropriate changes to the response plan.

8. Thou shalt never freelance nor cowboy: This CERTmandment is closely related to the Seventh, insofar as every CERT member is acting as part of an organized, team

response, not as an individual. "Freelancing" is the exact opposite of teamwork. This is when one or more CERT responders go off on their own, doing whatever they want, without consideration of the incident response plan. Not only are these rogue responders failing to contribute to the organized effort, their actions may actually work against the planned response. Furthermore, since they're operating outside of the chain of command, if something were to happen to them, no one else would know to help them or go looking for them. "Cowboys" can be operating within the incident plan and the chain of command, but do so without proper regard to their own safety (First CERTmandment) or their personal limitations (Fifth CERTmandment). These people are the ones hacking vents through the roof of a burning building or trying to perform a tracheotomy because they saw it done on "ER." Both freelancers and cowboys are a danger to themselves and those around them, and fail to contribute to an effective emergency response.

9. Thou shalt always know the score: In short, keep track of everything that's going on. We always do an initial "size up" (Third CERTmandment), whether we're dealing with the entire incident or an individual victim. However, emergency response deals with fluid and ever-changing situations, and we don't want anyone or anything falling through the cracks. We must constantly reevaluate the circumstances we're facing, so that we can appropriately adapt our response. Who's on what team and which teams are still in the building? Are any of the victims in the treatment area getting worse? Are we running low on supplies? Is that fire getting bigger? As long as we consistently and constantly reexamine our situation, we won't be faced with any nasty, avoidable surprises and neither responders nor the victims they're helping will get lost in the shuffle.

10. Thou shalt always be prepared: Just like a good Boy Scout, this is the best way that we can be true to the First CERTmandment (keep thine own self safe). Following this CERTmandment begins way before any real emergency occurs. Do we have 72 hours of food, water and other necessary supplies? Does everyone in the family know the home evacuation plan and how we'll reunite afterwards? Is there enough gas in the car? Have I strapped down and/or secured everything that could fall down or topple over during an earthquake? Do I know the location of alternative exits? Have I practiced my response skills at a CERT drill? Being prepared means having all the necessary supplies, equipment, training and planning already completed and in place before disaster strikes, which eliminates the need to try and figure things out while all hell's breaking loose. Even beyond that, preparedness allows you the peace of mind, even during a catastrophic event (earthquake, tornado, hurricane, etc.), that comes with the knowledge that you and your family (and, quite possibly, your home as well) will survive. ■

# Congratulations!

to our newest CERT members in Cooper Landing. These volunteers completed their Community Emergency Response Team training with a day of drills on Saturday, March 5. A big thanks to our new CERT trainer, Curt Jacobson, and all his co-instructors from the Moose Pass Volunteer Fire and Ambulance. The new Cooper Landing CERT members:

Jack Britton	Kim Neis
David Davis	Duane Ohnemus
Sally Davis	John-Paul Sullivan
Keith Doroff	Kay Thomas
Anna Engbers	Kendall Thomas
Ken Green	John Thomas
Jacqueline Greenman	Marjorie Van Kooten
Gerald Neis	

The following Cooper Landing CERT members completed their training in 2004: Gerry Young, Robin Vorpahl

Other Communities with CERT members who have completed all their training: Anchor Point, Fritz Creek, Kenai, Soldotna



Cooper Landing CERT drill: the team uses cribbing to extricate Rescue Randy.



Two Cooper Landing CERT members use their new training to put out a fire.

This newsletter is published quarterly by the Kenai Peninsula Citizen Corps.

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