



# KENAI PENINSULA CITIZEN CORPS

Resources for building stronger, safer communities on the Kenai Peninsula

Winter 2005

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## KENAI PENINSULA CITIZEN CORPS COUNCIL

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## What is Citizen Corps and why am I getting this newsletter?

by Kim Lorentzen, KP Citizen Corps Coordinator

Many of you are familiar with "CERT," or "Neighborhood Watch," but the name "Citizen Corps" might be new to you.

The Kenai Peninsula Citizen Corps is a series of volunteer-based programs that provide communities with training, resources to help identify disaster risks and develop solutions, and opportunities to connect local leaders, volunteers and first responders.

As most of you already know, Kenai Peninsula communities extend over 25,000 square miles and are at risk for wildfires, flooding, high winds, blizzards, extreme cold, earthquakes, tsunami and volcanic activity. If you were here for the 1964 earthquake (or the 2000 Summit Lake avalanche that cut off Seward, or the 2002 flooding that took out the Deep Creek bridge and cut off Homer, or...), you understand that help can't always get to you in a matter of minutes — it's good to know how to help yourself and the people around you!

There are four programs under the "Kenai Peninsula Citizen Corps" umbrella and they're all aimed at giving people like you — *people who want*

*to help make their neighborhoods, schools and towns safer* — the training you'll need and the opportunity to volunteer right where you live.

There are four Citizen Corps programs on the Kenai Peninsula and they focus on *emergency preparedness and response, fire awareness and wildfire prevention, crime prevention, and large-scale healthcare emergencies.*

Safe communities are built one person at a time. If you want to be one of those people who are working to strengthen their communities, take a look at these three basic steps. **Be Prepared:** Learn the potential for disaster in your community. Develop a family plan. Put together a disaster kit. **Train:** Take advantage of CPR, First Aid, Fire Corps, CERT or other courses in your community. **Volunteer:** There are many opportunities, both in prevention and response.

Finally, *contribute to our local Citizen Corps newsletter.* This newsletter is intended to be a forum for us all to share what we're doing, what works, what we've learned (*translation: "What DOESN'T work"*), and what we think we need for our communities to prevent crime and prepare for emergencies.

Many thanks to CERT members who have returned the Course Completion Survey indicating your interest in further training. Your interests will determine our 2005 course offerings. (If you have not yet returned your survey, it's not too late!)

Send in your stories, pictures of CERT training or tips about how your community has put a Citizen Corps program to work. ■

## FROM THE FIELD: Emergency Communications for the Community Emergency Response Team

(or, "Sometimes, It Takes a HAM to Get the Message Out")

by Bill Nelson, Kenai CERT Member and Amateur Radio Operator



I am sure that all the participants in the CERT training program would agree that it has been a very worthwhile experience, and the several teams are ready and able to serve our different communities in the event of a disaster here on the Kenai Peninsula. I am also happy to see the recent questionnaire in which we each have an opportunity to request additional training, which will enhance the basic skills we've learned thus far.

As amateur radio operators (HAM radio), Victor Hett and I have been asked to provide some information regarding CERTs and the subject of Radio Communications. Several of us have noticed that as good as the CERT training was, there was a shortcoming regarding communications not only between the team members, but to the agencies as well. This article will deal with some options available, and how they could be used in the event of situation whereby a CERT team might be activated.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has approved three "public" radio communications systems that could be useful to CERT teams. The first is the FRS or Family Radio Service. These are the "walkie-talkie" or more correctly called "hand-held" radios, usually sold in pairs and costing anywhere from \$25 to \$50 or more for the pair. They are low power, maybe good for a couple miles range and are easily operated. No license is required. My wife and I find ours useful when shopping in Anchorage, and we've even used them in Fred Meyer! Ours operate on 14 different frequencies or channels. They would be a good choice for the CERT teams as they would be very helpful in doing searches and inspecting buildings, and just keeping a team in touch in a small geographical area.



A second application is the Citizen Band Service or CB. Radios in this class include hand-helds, mobile and base stations. These function at a little more power (5 watts) and will operate on several frequencies or channels.

The range is improved and no license is required. These radios can often be purchased for \$50 to \$100. Sadly, there is very little oversight of this mode and it can often be very chaotic and undisciplined. If we utilize this service, we run the risk of being heard by anyone monitoring our operating frequency, and inadvertently passing information that we would rather not "broadcast" to the general public. However, it might have some merit with hand-held units that would not transmit very far.

A third option is the Amateur Radio Service. Like CB, this equipment includes hand-helds, mobiles and base stations. Power ranges from 5 watts up to 100 watts or more. Additionally, with the aid of a "repeater", low power radios can easily reach the Anchorage area from the Central Peninsula. Presently, there are three license grades in this service, Technician, General and Extra-Class. The Technician class license allows one to operate VHF and UHF radios that utilize repeaters here and in Anchorage. Licensed operators would be able to operate on a much broader frequency range, and have more privacy, as the general public does normally not purchase these radios.

These are just some of the options available. There are others, but the equipment needed for the foregoing examples is fairly economical in price. A little effort and study would be necessary for obtaining a Technician license, but it is really not that difficult.

One of the goals of the Kenai Peninsula CERT program is to see more radio operators on the teams. If members show enough interest, Vic and I will see what we can do about developing a training module covering radio communications which will be included in future sessions of the CERT program. ■

### Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)

CERT members receive broad prevention-and-response training and volunteer in their communities to promote emergency preparedness and respond in the event of a disaster. Training sessions cover

- disaster preparedness
- fire suppression
- basic triage and emergency life-saving techniques
- light search and rescue
- team organization
- disaster psychology
- a disaster simulation drill

CERT volunteers help with a variety of community safety activities, including education, First Aid stations at events, and missing persons searches.

### Fire Corps

Fire Corps gives individuals and neighborhoods the training and opportunity to assist professional and volunteer fire departments. The course will help you understand fire behavior and recognition of wildfire threats to properties and homes, learn how to create a defensible space around your home, learn to prepare for an evacuation and understand the evacuation procedures, learn to prepare and pre-treat your home, and learn about resources available in your community to help you prevent and prepare for wildfire.

### Neighborhood Watch

Neighborhood Watch groups work with local law enforcement to reduce crime in their neighborhoods. Learn to help protect yourself and your family, protect and comfort children, get to know and assist your neighbors, and report crimes and suspicious activities.

### Medical Reserve Corps

The Medical Reserve Corps coordinates health care professionals who will volunteer to assist during a large-scale emergency.

Practicing and retired health professionals on the Medical Reserve List may be called in during an emergency. MRC volunteers also assist in promoting public health in their communities throughout the year. ■



### FROM THE FIELD: Our Paved Wilderness

by Anchor Point CERT Co-Instructor, Patty Graham

Driving with eagle-eye perception, CERT instructor Carolyn Roderick casually remarks to this green

Californian passenger, “moose on our right”. We were comfortably speeding back from a trip to the Kenai Peninsula Borough Office of Emergency Management, returning spent red cylinders used at our recent class training for disaster preparedness. At 800 yards and a slow ten seconds later - coming out of brown sticks off in the gray horizon - two sauntering midsize moose appear near the side of the road. Carolyn’s persistent perception averted a possible road encounter, the unpredictable erratic behavior of

these lumbering beasts having caused many a disaster in our paved wilderness here in Alaska - an abrupt and unanticipated road collision for those without the foresight of nature. Carolyn’s teaching style is plucky and playful. She is generous and affable with her knowledge and wisdom - what a treat! Volunteer, friend, wife, mother, mentor, grandma, EMT - she still maintains a modest profile in her community. Her compassion as a paramedic is represented through her family and children of who she is individually proud and caring. We participated in a week-long CERT Train-the-Trainer class

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*Did you know that you can take a CERT refresher course online?*

Go to  
<http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/IS/is317.asp>  
to download the course.

*If you’re a member of a Kenai Peninsula CERT team, be sure to notify us of your completion of the course – we’ll make a note on your CERT form that you’ve completed a refresher course.*

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this past July in Wasilla. Daily drills, tabletop improvisational disasters, firefighting scenarios, search and rescue, triage - our week flew past quickly. Her candor and spunky approach, quick wit and adaptive behavior have made her an incredible resource and ally for all of us in a time of distress. *Thank you, Carolyn, for letting me steal some of your thunder and teach with you in your recent Anchor Point CERT Class.* ■

## Looking for more information? Find it on the Web!

The Kenai Peninsula Borough's Emergency website is a good place to find information about the **history of disaster events on the Kenai Peninsula, tips on how to prepare for an emergency, how to prepare your animals for an emergency, or apply online for CERT training.** You'll find these resources at [www.borough.kenai.ak.us/emergency](http://www.borough.kenai.ak.us/emergency).

The national Citizen Corps website has information about **Citizen Corps programs** and will give you access to FEMA's "**Are You Ready?**" publication with

great emergency preparedness guidelines:

[www.citizen corps.gov/programs](http://www.citizen corps.gov/programs)

For more information about **Fire Corps**, go to [www.firecorps.org](http://www.firecorps.org)

For more information about **wildfire hazards on the Kenai Peninsula**, go the Spruce Bark Beetle Mitigation Program website at [www.borough.kenai.ak.us/sprucebeetle](http://www.borough.kenai.ak.us/sprucebeetle)



## Other Resources for Emergency Preparedness

There are several publications available from the Kenai Peninsula Borough Office of Emergency Management. Call 262-4910 to request any of these informative brochures and books:

- *Ash Alert! How to Protect Your Family, Home, and Business*
- *Wildfire...Are You Prepared?*
- *Helping Children Cope With Disaster*
- *Your Family Disaster Plan*
- *Your Family Disaster Supplies Kit*
- *Food and Water in an Emergency*
- *Avalanche Safety; Are You Ready?*
- *An In-Depth Guide to Citizen Preparedness (from FEMA)*

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