



TOWN OF RIDGEFIELD
COMMUNITY EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS TEAM
400 MAIN STREET, RIDGEFIELD, CONNECTICUT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CERTS ON THE RISE

RIDGEFIELD, CT, MAY 8, 2017--With hurricane season just around the corner, the timing for Ridgefield's next Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) class couldn't be better. Beginning Monday, May 15, the class will be held four weeknights and one Saturday in order to fulfill the 20-hour program requirement for residents age 16 and older.

"Our numbers are growing," said First Selectman Rudy Marconi. "It's great to have so many volunteers because the more people we have who know what to do in an emergency, the better off our families, friends and community will be."

CERT is a program of Citizen Corps, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's approach to involve citizens in emergency preparedness, and is funded through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The function of CERT is to assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following a major disaster when professional responders are not immediately available to meet the demand for service. After training, CERT students are better prepared to take care of themselves and their community. The 20-hour FEMA-approved course includes training in Disaster Preparedness, Medical Operations, Light Search and Rescue, Fire Suppression, Team Organization and Disaster Psychology.

Ridgefield CERTs were activated during Hurricane Sandy and Super Storm Irene as well as a freak snowstorm often referred to as "Snow-tober," that left the Town without power. During each of those events CERTs manned phones at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), worked with news media, informed the community with regular updates, assessed damage to roads and property and distributed water and other necessities.

Ridgefield CERTs are unique in that trained team members actually work in the EOC in a number of key positions including Damage Assessment, a critical function Identifying passable roads or those in need of clearing after storms. Also part of the EOC is the Public Information Office made up of CERT volunteers who provide critical information to the public and also man the phone lines so the community can talk to a live person with questions or concerns. During storms, these volunteers fielded hundreds of calls.

On "blue-sky days" CERTs often volunteer during large community events like the tree lighting and the Ridgefield Triathlon. The CERT Public Information Office (PIO) runs a community

awareness campaign called *Ridgefield Is Ready, Are You?* which provides information on how to help families and neighborhoods stay prepared for unexpected events. Recently, CERTS provided handouts at the RVNA Health Fair and will again have a table with valuable information during Public Safety Day in September.

Many of the Town's employees and elected officials are trained as CERTs including First Selectman Rudy Marconi. Karen Tappe, Ridgefield CERT Personnel and Training Officer said Ridgefield has over 100 active CERT volunteers.

"We couldn't operate a sophisticated emergency response without CERT volunteers. They are a tremendous asset to our Town," said Mr. Marconi.

Classes will be held at Yanity Gym, Emergency Operations Center, opposite the Town Hall Annex. The four weekday classes are 6:30-9:30 pm on Monday, May 15; Wednesday, May 17; Monday, May 22; and Wednesday, May 24 (includes graduation). The Saturday, May 20 class will run 8:00 am – 1 pm.

Residents interested in signing up should contact karen.omeara@priceline.com and provide a full name, complete mailing address and contact phone numbers (home, cell, work) as well as an email address.

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PHOTO: PREACHING PREPAREDNESS at Public Safety Day are Wendy Lionetti and Anita Barz of the CERT PIO Team. Sign-ups for the next CERT class are now underway.