Evaluating Community Emergency Response

Executive Leadership

Evaluating Community Emergency Response Teams

For Use in the Santa Fe Area

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Abstract

The problem that was addressed was the lack of knowledge about the use of Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) by Santa Fe emergency managers despite the apparent need for their existence.

The purpose of this research was to identify and describe the current capability of the Santa Fe Fire Department (SFFD) regarding disaster response and investigate the extent to which a CERT might contribute to the disaster response capability of the SFFD.

Descriptive research was used to compare and contrast CERT programs and examine the SFFD capabilities. Procedures used included a literature review and interviews with emergency managers. The results led to recommendations that the SFFD improve their ability to handle disaster response by encouraging the creation of CERTs.
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Introduction

By statute, state and local governments are responsible for disaster preparedness and emergency management. Local government units such as police and fire departments are usually the first line of defense tasked with providing public safety and security. Unfortunately, these departments must often choose between necessary programs. Due to a lack of trained personnel, a lack of additional funds for new programs, or an already stretched budget and despite the best intentions of the decision makers, citizens are often left with incomplete or inadequate protective mechanisms. However, citizens deserve the greatest possible levels of protection against disasters. Specifically, citizens deserve high levels of protection against disasters and adequate mechanisms to mobilize assistance when a disaster occurs.

The City of Santa Fe Fire Department (SFFD) and the Santa Fe area emergency managers have expressed their beliefs that one way to augment traditional fire department emergency response is to create citizen response groups formed under the auspice of Citizen Corps. Specifically, the concept of creating a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) in the Santa Fe area has been mentioned. The problem is that despite the perceived need and expressed desire to create a CERT, the SFFD has neither identified the current response capabilities of agencies within the Santa Fe area, nor explored the capabilities and uses of a CERT within the Santa Fe area. The purpose of this research is to identify and describe the current capability of the SFFD regarding disaster response, the capabilities of Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) in the Santa Fe area, and the extent to which these CERTs might contribute to the disaster response capability of the SFFD. The research questions for this paper are then:

1. What is the current capability of the SFFD regarding disaster response?

2. What are the capabilities, if any, of CERTs in the Santa Fe area?
3. To what extent could CERTs contribute to the disaster response capability of the SFFD?

To answer these research questions, a literature review and interviews with Santa Fe area emergency managers will be used. Descriptive research will be used to complete this applied project.

There are very few things that can be recognized as more important to the public than safety. In the aftermath of events such as the September 11th terrorist attacks and hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the importance of an organized approach to disaster and emergency response is clear. President Bush has clearly marked the importance of public safety to public administration at the national level with efforts such as the National Response Plan and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). This research will attempt to offer suggestions on how to continue this trend at the local level.

Background and Significance

The discipline of public administration advocates for the application of core values like effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, equality, and equity in the provision of public sector goods and services. In the context of providing safety and security to the public through selecting the optimal disaster response mechanism, each of these values is relevant. For example, effectiveness refers to the accomplishment of goals, so selecting the mechanism most likely to provide the best safety and security is important. Efficiency refers to managing public resources to achieve the greatest output for the least input and, in this area, applies by the identification of alternative inputs to achieve the desired output of public safety.

Accountability is remaining answerable to the public for actions taken on their behalf and, in regard to this study, means having the ability to ensure the public that it is being provided
for with the best practices of public safety through the use of a CERT or an alternative. Equality refers to due process, that each person will receive the same treatment in the provision of public goods and services, so fire departments would be expected to provide the same level of disaster response in the same manner to each individual. Finally, equity refers to the equal distribution of resources and, again, more disaster response resources would not be allocated to one part of a local community than another part, when this value is in evidence.

After accepting these principles, they can be applied to improve the delivery of emergency relief during disasters. Recent history indicates that citizens within the United States are at risk for both natural and manmade disasters. You do not have to look far into the past to recognize this truth: the events of September 11th, hurricanes Rita and Katrina, and the wildfires in the West all created disaster situations that were experienced within our country. Furthermore, it can be predicted that disasters will continue that will need to be mitigated. These examples indicate that the emergency response capabilities will be taxed when a disaster strikes despite the good intentions of government agencies and all the attention paid to preparedness. Thus, citizens must expect to rely upon each other in many cases as first responders to disasters and significant emergencies (Bertone, 2006; Chin, 2004; Gresser, 2005; Haddow & Bullock, 2006).

However, a study conducted by the DHS in 2003 found that most Americans did not entirely understand how to respond to major emergencies, as only 25% involved in the study answered more than half of the questions correctly, and 81% didn’t know the basic steps to surviving a chemical attack. Similarly, a 2004 survey by the Red Cross and Wirthlin Worldwide found that only 10% of American households have an emergency plan and basic medical training (Chin, 2004). These studies have proven that there is a definite level of ignorance among
American citizens regarding emergency preparedness. In response to this reality, citizens nationwide are creating more formalized groups to prepare for disasters.

Citizen involvement in the United States was formally organized after the attacks on September 11th when President Bush worked to create the DHS. While the citizen response groups existed prior to these events, the clear need for an organized and coordinated response led to the creation of Citizen Corps under USA Freedom Corps, and the formalization of DHS (Bush, 2002; United States Department of Homeland Security [USDHS], n.d.a). Furthermore, there are a number of ways that citizens have been used in the United States to augment paid professional emergency services; many of these are outlined in the National Response Plan, but many remain untested. Citizen Corps, the largest and most comprehensive, was created to coordinate volunteer activities to make our communities safer. The program consists of five base elements: CERT, Fire Corps, USA on Watch, the Medical Reserve Corp, and Volunteers in Police Services. Citizen Corps is coordinated at the federal level by DHS. However, in most cases it is driven at the local level, despite the organizational framework that stems from the federal government (Bertone, 2006; Bingham, 2004; Citizen Corps, n.d.).

Despite the recognition that there is a definite need for organized citizen participation to augment traditional fire department emergency response during disasters, the SFFD has yet to respond. In recent years, there has been the recognition that some disasters might extend beyond the initial response capabilities of local emergency responders. Specifically, Santa Fe area emergency managers were most concerned about the risk of wildland urban interface (WUI) fires and hazardous materials releases (Litzenberg, 2005). Furthermore, there has been some motion made towards developing a Santa Fe area CERT. However, these attempts have never resulted in the creation of an organized CERT or other form of citizen involvement (S. Nolde, personal...
communication, October 10, 2006; C. Rivera, personal communication, October 10, 2006). By investigating the potential uses of a CERT in the Santa Fe area and designing a program based upon those that have been used by other agencies, the SFFD might respond to these realities and encourage citizen participation.

This research intends to support the operational objectives of the United States Fire Administration (USFA). First, the investigation and subsequent creation of a CERT in the Santa Fe area could indirectly reduce the loss of life from citizens of all ages should the need for citizen involvement arise. In addition, the research results and creation of formalized pathways for citizen involvement will help to encourage a comprehensive, multi-hazard risk reduction plan within the Santa Fe area. Finally, the intent of this research is to encourage the emergency response agencies in the Santa Fe area to respond to the need for increased response capabilities by promoting citizen involvement. Furthermore, this research is directly related to units contained with the USFA Executive Leadership course. Primarily, the results of this research will help to enforce ways in which a leader can manage multiple roles (Unit 5). In addition, the process of this research will allow Santa Fe area emergency managers to focus on personal leadership factors such as influencing (Unit 8) and networking (Unit 10) during program design, creation, and inception.

**Literature Review**

Considering recent disasters such as hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the massive wildfires of California and the Southwest, and the attacks of September 11th, it is evident that citizens in the United States are potentially at risk for disasters, both natural and human caused. It is also clear from these examples that citizens will need to rely on each other as first responders to augment
the response of the fire departments and other emergency responders (Bertone, 2006; Chin, 2004; Gresser, 2005; Haddow & Bullock, 2006).

While citizen involvement has occurred in the United States since the inception of emergency services, a true push towards national organization was first evident after the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. Immediate changes were evident at all organizational levels of the government; these included stockpiling of medicines, more acute aviation and border security, better information sharing, and enhanced deployment of protection resources. It was then recognized that no single agency was responsible for providing protection to the United States during disasters; furthermore, it was noted that these responsibilities were shared between over 100 governmental agencies. The June 2002 report by President Bush worked to create the DHS; this was intended to be the most significant transformation of US government in over half a century, bringing together all of the involved agencies under one single umbrella. In creating the DHS, President Bush used experiences in the recent terrorist attacks, as well as proposals that stemmed from studies by outside agencies, commissions, and members of Congress (Bush, 2002; USDHS, n.d.a).

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mission has remained the same throughout the transition from independent government agency to its placement under the DHS organizational chart: to lead the nation in preparing for all types of disasters and to manage the federal level response and recovery efforts during and after disasters. To meet this mission, FEMA has 2,000 full time employees who help administer mitigation and preparation programs throughout the nation. In addition, FEMA has a cadre of 4000 trained disaster assistance employees who remain able to respond when requested. FEMA frequently teams with private sector and non-profit agencies such as Red Cross to provide assistance to communities and
individuals. Furthermore, FEMA works with local and state agencies and as many as 28 other federal agencies to respond to calls for assistance before, during, and after disasters strike.

Federal partners include the Federal Communication Commission and the National Weather Service. FEMA also responds to disasters as part of the Disaster Medical Assistance System in partnership with the Department of Heath and Human Services, the Department of Defense, the Veterans Administration, and many different hospitals and clinics (Federal Emergency Management Agency, n.d.b).

The National Response Plan is intended to be an all hazards plan to mitigate disasters and emergencies that happen within the United States. Updated May 25, 2006, it is designed to account for all of the lessons learned from past incidents, as well as base actions on predicted and anticipated realities. The National Response Plan is designed to be all inclusive, and includes response from agencies including firefighting, law enforcement, emergency management, homeland security, public works, public health, emergency medical services, and the private sector. It forms the relationships and procedures with which a unified response can be managed. The procedures and policies of this plan help to: save lives and protect health; ensure homeland security and safety; prevent incidents from occurring and minimize their effect when they do; conduct investigation, protect and preserve evidence, and apprehend and detain when needed; and to facilitate recovery to individuals, communities, businesses, and the environment when incidents do occur. The National Response Plan outlined ways in which volunteers were to be utilized (USDHS, n.d.a; USDHS, n.d.b).

There are a number of ways that citizens have been used in the United States to augment paid professional emergency services; many of these are outlined in the National Response Plan, but many remain untested. Citizen Corps, the largest and most comprehensive, was created to
coordinate volunteer activities to make our communities safer. Coordinated at the federal level by the DHS, it falls under the program launched by President George W. Bush in response to the September 11th attacks called USA Freedom Corps. The program consists of five base elements: CERT, Fire Corps, USA on Watch, the Medical Reserve Corp, and Volunteers in Police Services (Bertone, 2006; Bingham, 2004; Citizen Corps, n.d.).

Citizen Corps Councils are formed at the local level in order to bring together emergency response leaders from each community. The purpose of these councils is to match first response needs with the abilities of the responders, to educate the public on safety and volunteerism, and to promote Citizen Corps and all of its programs. States appoint Citizen Corps Coordinators to work with the local governments, develop statewide strategies for increasing volunteer coordination, match training needs with statewide training initiatives, report accomplishments, and secure funding. Currently, all states have a Citizen Corps Council; there are approximately 2000 local councils, and 72% of the population of the United States is served by some form of the Citizen Corps (Citizen Corps, n.d.).

Ohio has emerged as one of the leading states in development of Citizen Corps programs and citizen involvement. Ohio Governor Bob Taft stated that the reason behind the success of the programs was the longtime commitment to volunteerism. Furthermore, the May 2002 Ohio Community Service Council initiative to fund Citizen Corps ensured its continuing success. Since then, nearly $2.5 million has been funneled into Ohio for use by the Citizen Corps. In addition, support from the private sector has allowed the Citizen Corps initiatives to flourish (Bingham, 2004).

The primary operation, and most widely used division of Citizen Corps remains CERT. CERT stemmed from visits by an assistant fire chief in the Los Angeles City Fire Department
after he studied major earthquake response in Osaka, Japan and Mexico City. Contrary to the non-operational roles of other divisions of Citizen Corps, CERT was formed on the premise that a group of citizens could be trained to be the first responders to major disasters. While funding was difficult upon its inception, Los Angeles officially developed CERT following the 1987 Whittier Narrows earthquake (Bertone, 2006; Borden & Lee, 2002; Campbell, 2004a; Community Emergency Response Team Los Angeles [CERT-LA], n.d.; Chin, 2004; Citizen Corps. n.d.; Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA], n.d.a; Gresser, 2005; Haddow & Bullock, 2006; Wagman, 2003a).

CERT was recognized nationwide in 1993 when FEMA sponsored a CERT initiative and created a standard set of training courses to enable consistency. President Bush placed CERT under Citizen Corps in 2002, and urged people to commit at least two years to Citizen Corps or similar efforts over their lifetime. CERT is now used in all 50 states; DHS Secretary Tom Ridge announced in 2004 that nearly 1000 communities nationwide had established Citizens Corps Councils; recent estimates claim upwards of 2000 Councils. (Bertone, 2006; Chin, 2004; Citizen Corps. n.d.). FEMA recently reported that more than 2000 CERT have now been established, up from an estimated 170 in 28 states in 2001 (Campbell, 2004a; Yates, 2006)

When first developed in the Los Angeles City Fire Department, the CERT program was designed to assist communities in taking care of themselves in the aftermath of a disaster. In this role, CERT has been used to assist with operations such as hazard reduction, suppression of small fires, medical treatment, establishing incident facilities, collecting and compiling data, and establishing communication pathways. While members of CERT are volunteers, it must be recognized that CERT necessitates a significant investment of a local government’s resources and time. As such, the idea of CERT and its capabilities and uses has expanded. Thus, CERT
members have been used to effect smoke alarm distribution, evacuations, and community awareness of specific hazards; enhance staffing at special events; and act as victims during training scenarios. One thing that has not changed is the recognition that CERT has limited capabilities: members have not been used to perform medical, fire, or rescue operations beyond their level of training, to suppress large fire, or to enter environments that might be considered hazardous (Bertone, 2006; Citizen Corps, n.d.; FEMA, n.d.a; Wagman, 2003a).

The recognition of the need for a CERT is made based upon local considerations, and its potential capabilities and uses. There are a number of steps that have been used in the successful implementation of a CERT. The primary step is to identify goals and the resources available for the program. This must begin with a reliable assessment of a community’s disaster preparedness, funding, and resource capabilities. Next, you must gain approval from the necessary officials and engage the stakeholders. Stakeholders might include business and industry, media, not-for-profit organizations, public interest groups, health care providers, government agencies, and education groups (Campbell, 2004b; Citizen Corps, n.d.).

Once potential recruits are identified they must be organized and trained and refresher training must be provided regularly. Training must be tailored to the specific needs identified for each community by the CERT developers. Two main tips that have been given by communities in which a CERT has been created are to start slowly, and to allow plenty of lead time. In addition, curriculum should be developed by the instructors who will deliver the program, and a dry run should be done prior to the start of the CERT training. The dry run or pilot program should be followed by an evaluation and possible modifications so that the program delivery is relatively seamless (Citizen Corps, n.d.).
Suggestions and templates for CERT training are available from multiple resources. One example is the *Community Emergency Response Team Participant Manual* offered by FEMA (n.d.a). In this manual, the first unit reviews disaster preparedness and includes sections on the history of disasters, hazards, and preparedness. The second unit is a summary of fire safety and suppression. Next, two units deal with disaster medical operations. The fifth block of instruction addresses light search and rescue. The next two units address the organization of the CERT and the psychology of disasters. Finally, the training is concluded with a block on terrorism, and a disaster simulation during which recruits get to exercise their newly acquired skills and knowledge (Bertone, 2006; Borden & Lee, 2002; Campbell, 2004a; Haddow & Bullock, 2006).

This plan is suggested to be delivered in two to three hour sessions once a week for a seven week period (Haddow & Bullock). Furthermore, any CERT training will need to be supplemented with local protocols, procedures, and hazards which might not be included in a generalized program (Bertone; Campbell).

Once trained, it is critical to maintain the readiness of CERT members with ongoing training and team building. Members of the team must be continuously developed, as the world is constantly changing. In most cases the ongoing training is mandatory to maintain eligibility on the CERT (Bertone, 2006; Borden & Lee, 2002; Citizen Corps, n.d.; Wagman, 2003a). For example, many have added enhanced blocks on response to terrorism since the events that occurred on September 11th in New York City (Wagman).

The concept of CERT has not flourished without its opponents. Skepticism from current emergency response resources has been noted in many communities that have established CERT. In areas where this conflict is anticipated, it is important to clearly define the uses and deployment of CERT volunteers, and to establish the differences between paid responders’
Evaluating Community Emergency Responsibilities and those of the volunteers. In most cases, this clear delineation has established a good relationship between the two entities and has allowed for the greatest benefit for the communities in which they function (Campbell, 2004a; Wagman, 2003a).

Los Angeles City Fire Department, the originators of the CERT concept, have one of the more developed programs that exists. On the website for CERT-LA (n.d.) the program is described as “a positive and realistic approach to emergency and disaster situations where citizens may initially be on their own and their actions can make a difference”. The stated goal of the Los Angeles program is to prepare the citizens who will naturally respond to incidents to do so safely and efficiently. This program starts with a 17 ½ hour training with certification followed by biannual refresher training; classes are given all year and in many locations. Los Angeles CERT frequently responds to planned events such as the Los Angeles Marathon and political events, but they remain at the ready for any and all incidents (CERT-LA, n.d.). CERT-LA has now trained nearly 47,000 volunteers (Gresser, 2005).

San Francisco Fire Department also has a well established and long lasting CERT which they call the Neighborhood Emergency Response Team (NERT). The initial training for this program is funded as a line item in the budget, on-going training is funded by the NERT non-profit auxiliary. San Francisco’s NERT puts on bi-annual drills for exercising and refreshing, to which the mayor, board of supervisors, and the media are invited. In addition to the traditional response, San Francisco has added what they call MERCury, the Motorcycle Emergency Response Corps. These members are trained on riding skills, communication, and rescue, as well as the normal NERT training. Their role is as a highly mobile response team during disasters. San Francisco NERT has around 11,000 trained volunteers (Kelly, 2003).
The City of Chandler CERT was the first in the state of Arizona, and has trained over 400 volunteers in its first two years. To help administer the program, the Chandler Fire Department formed the Chandler CERT Council. With assistance from the fire department, the Council meets monthly to organize the CERT training and activities. Also, Chandler CERT has been expanded to assist with programs such as child safety seat and drowning prevention. Chandler CERT was designed as a three tier system to allow volunteers to choose the level at which they wanted to participate. Tier one is known as the “Personal Awareness Tier”; these volunteers receive six nights of training to allow them to help their family survive a disaster, but they are not given a vest or helmet. Tier two is known as the “Neighborhood Responders”; they are trained for six nights and put through a drill that would help them assist their neighbors in a disaster. Tier two volunteers are required to attend one refresher class and one drill annually to maintain their certification and they are given a vest and a helmet to aide in safe response. Tier three is the “Community Responder Tier”; these volunteers receive the same initial training as tier two, but must take three classes a year to maintain eligibility (Gresser, 2005).

The Chandler CERT Council has identified a number of key factors to their success. First, the local emergency responders are trained to provide the CERT training so consistency in response is maintained. Next, annual training must integrate the paid employees with the volunteers so that communication abilities and limitations are identified. Also, training must be focused on basic skills that include incident command to avoid freelancing during incidents. Included in this training is the necessity of being professional but assertive during emergency incidents. The final key component is to provide critical incident stress debriefing after each incident to maintain the volunteers’ well being (Gresser, 2005).
While Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chandler have all had success administering CERT at least in part with public funds, there is also interest in including private sector entities in CERT organization. For example, the Evansville, Indiana CERT was granted $8000 in donations and in-kind contributions to fund training and equipping volunteers. Understanding their local risks and their potential impact, 27 local businesses each donate between $250 and $2500 annually for disaster preparedness. This is not the norm, however, primarily because the public sector has rarely convinced private entities that they are part of the solution. Considering the estimate of $85 to $100 per volunteer (excluding trainer costs), and frequently tight operating budgets, this is far from the truth. Another example of where cooperation has worked occurred with the San Francisco CERT. ChevronTexaco provided $25,000 to train and equip 150 volunteers from their agency in the early 1990s; the instructor and training costs incurred by the San Francisco Fire Department were underwritten by the company. Yet another example occurred in Los Angeles, as the Business and Industry Council for Emergency Preparedness and Planning was organized by Mayor Tom Bradley. Through this organization, companies try to prepare themselves so that they would not need help in an emergency; a company may support an internal CERT, investing training time and money for equipment. The concept of this business council has since spread to other communities in California, Cleveland, Ecuador, and Japan (Wagman, 2003b).

The literature review indicates that CERTs can be used successfully to augment traditional fire department emergency response. The framework has been established at the federal level to support the use of programs such as CERT under Citizen Corps. Some funding alternatives have been provided at the federal level for program creation. Furthermore, many agencies have established CERTs that can be used as examples for use in other localities;
examples include Los Angeles, Chandler, and San Francisco. While it is clear that CERTs are potentially effective, it is also evident that local politics must be accounted for when designing a CERT and upon program inception.

Procedures

Research Methodology

Descriptive research was used to complete this ARP. The goals of this descriptive research were to identify and describe the current capability of the SFFD regarding disaster response, the capabilities of CERTs in the Santa Fe area, and the extent to which CERTs might contribute to the disaster response capability of the SFFD. Finally, this information was used to make recommendations for creation of a CERT in the Santa Fe area.

The first step of this research was to compile the resources available at the National Emergency Training Center’s Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy. Additional review of literature was accomplished utilizing resources available at the SFFD and the Santa Fe County Fire Department-Hondo District resource libraries. Textbooks, periodicals, magazines, and trade journals from those facilities were used to review background and technical information on CERTs. Additionally, on-line research was conducted using the internet to identify departments that use CERT, funding alternatives, and recommendations for use of CERTs.

Finally, Michelle Nolde, WUI Specialist for the SFFD; Chris Rivera, SFFD Chief; and Martin Vigil, Emergency Management Director of the City and County of Santa Fe were interviewed. The intent of these interviews was to establish the concern for disaster response in and around Santa Fe, to examine the response capabilities of the SFFD, and to establish the need for a CERT in the Santa Fe area. The questions asked of these interviewees were as follows:
1. What are the strengths and deficiencies in the disaster response capabilities of the SFFD?

2. What external entities exist in the Santa Fe area to help with disaster response, and what are their realistic capabilities?

3. Is there, or has there ever been, a CERT in the Santa Fe area?

4. Is there a need for a CERT or another form of citizen involvement to support the traditional fire department response to disasters in the Santa Fe area?

As a result of the literature review and interviews with local authorities, this research identified answers to the research questions proposed. While an CERT was not developed, recommendations were made to instigate the development of a CERT in the Santa Fe area. These recommendations were forwarded to the SFFD Chiefs and the Labor Management Committee of the SFFD.

Limitations

The use of the five programs listed under Citizen Corps has limitations. First, all of the programs are locally led; therefore, you must have the capability to organize and utilize the volunteers of any of the programs. Second, the funding process for all of the programs is somewhat diluted. State representatives are generally charged with providing access to state and federal funds. However, these funds are generally acquired under the grant funding format, and are therefore neither guaranteed nor recurring. Thus, planning must be done to ensure a solid and continuous funding plan. Finally, looking at these programs does not take into account either local politics or culture. Programs must be individually assessed, analyzed, and initiated for use in a community. Recommendations for use must be reserved until a local assessment has been made.
In addition, this research focused specifically on programs that are organized under the Citizen Corps program at the federal level. It must be noted that other sorts of programs have been used outside of this framework. It would therefore be beneficial to investigate the characteristics and uses of other less high profile programs used throughout the United States and internationally.

Definition of Terms

*Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).* “The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program educates people about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. Using the training learned in the classroom and during exercises, CERT members can assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event when professional responders are not immediately available to help” (FEMA, n.d.a).

*Disaster.* “A sudden calamitous event bringing great damage, loss, or destruction” (Merriam Webster Online, n.d.).

*Mitigation.* “To cause to become less harsh or hostile…to make less severe or painful” (Merriam Webster Online, n.d.).

*Wildland urban interface.* “Line, area, or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels” (Goodson, 2003, p. 500).
Results

What is the current capability of the SFFD regarding disaster response?

The disaster response strength in the Santa Fe area revolves around the strength of the emergency responders who staff the Fire Department. The SFFD provides emergency response to all incidents within the Santa Fe City limits from five staffed stations and four unmanned equipped stations for use when needed. The SFFD has approximately 120 trained emergency responders on staff, with the minimum manning of 28 responders at any given moment (not including Chief Officers). It is accepted that the people who do the job every day will be the strongest asset should a disaster strike. Another strength of the SFFD is the familiarity that emergency responders within the Santa Fe area have with the National Incident Management System. It is hoped by emergency managers that the work that has been done to ensure this familiarity will help during disaster mitigation should the need arise. In addition, the SFFD has been working to develop an emergency response plan for the community that is based upon a template suggested by FEMA. This plan is intended to be worked from the bottom up to ensure consistency with every day operations (S. Nolde, personal communication, October 10, 2006; C. Rivera, personal communication, October 10, 2006).

Finally, the SFFD has a fairly well established set of mutual aid agreements to ensure an augmented response when needed. Primarily, this assistance would come from the SFCFD with which they have formal mutual aid agreements. The SFCFD consists of fourteen Districts staffed by eight emergency responders per shift, and assisted by approximately 400 volunteer responders. Less formal agreements exist with both Los Alamos and Albuquerque Fire Departments, but assistance could be expected during a disaster. The SFFD has a solid working relationship and official agreements with New Mexico State Forestry, which would provide
access to the State Emergency Operations Center and some state resources, and the United States
Forest Service. In addition, they have access to both the Disaster Medical Assistance Team and
Urban Search and Rescue Task Force one, both of which have teams based out of New Mexico.
Most of these cooperators have ensured a consistent familiarity with the National Incident
Management System. Finally, the SFFD has formed relationships with other agencies to provide
assistance during disasters; these include the Salvation Army, United Way, American Red Cross,
Saint Vincent Hospital, various nursing homes and senior citizen centers, the Santa Fe Public
Schools, and members of the press (C. Rivera, personal communication, November 21, 2006).

Also notable in Santa Fe are the weaknesses that exist in the system regarding response to
disasters. Currently, Santa Fe does not have a titled emergency manager. An Emergency
Management Director for the City and County of Santa Fe has been filling this role, but it is a
position for which a search has commenced to fill. Stemming from this vacancy, there is no clear
plan that exists to address emergency response to disasters in the Santa Fe area. A plan was
devised and distributed in 2003 when the last emergency manager left the position. However, the
plan has since dissolved. In rare instances when the plan was intended to be exercised, most
divisions were unable to locate their version of the plan, and the top down nature of the plan
disabled the capabilities of the field workers. When the plan was located, many of the contact
numbers were no longer valid, any many of the players had changed (C. Rivera, personal
communication, November 21, 2006).

In addition, there has been a lack of meaningful training to allow emergency responders
to excel in disaster response. Primarily, the SFFD has focused on presenting only the minimum
amount of training required to maintain currency according to FEMA and industry standards. In
addition, most training on disaster response has not included emergency responders; rather, it
generally involved emergency managers and dispatch centers as well as division heads and politicians. Finally, there is a lack of equipment available to help response to disasters (C. Rivera, personal communication, November 21, 2006).

*What are the capabilities, if any, of CERTs in the Santa Fe area?*

The guide to CERTs compiled by Citizen Corps (n.d.) indicates that a CERT exists in the Santa Fe area that is called the “Santa Fe County LEPD/CCC”. This listing states an approved date of January 1, 2001, and a created date of December 31, 2005. The contact is the Santa Fe City/County Emergency Manager who vacated the position in 2003. The listing also states that ten to twelve trainings would be provided throughout Santa Fe County during the year of program creation. There is a belief that there was some movement towards the development of a CERT in Santa Fe during the time when the old emergency manager was serving, but nothing was found to indicate that this was the case. In addition, the current Emergency Management Director of the City and County of Santa Fe has been directed to begin development of a CERT in the Santa Fe area (C. Rivera, personal communication, November 21, 2006).

Martin Vigil, the Emergency Management Director of the City and County of Santa Fe, has first hand knowledge of the lack of existence of a CERT in Santa Fe. When the previous emergency manager was exploring the CERT option he was granted money to provide the training; however, the grant expired, and the contract that he created to get the training was insufficient. Thus, the Santa Fe CERT dissolved before it was in service. Furthermore, Martin Vigil explains that money to fund a CERT has been hard to find since. He furthers that there are three or four communities within the Santa Fe area interested in forming CERT, which he intends to form once the vacant emergency manager position is filled and funds are secured. Three issues were marked as important to the successful implementation of these programs: 1)
the model used must be a traditional CERT-LA based program; 2) the initial training must be adequate; 3) these CERTs must be maintained with ongoing training (M. Vigil, personal communication, November 27, 2006).

Despite the Citizen Corps listing, there appears to be no CERT in existence in the Santa Fe area. The managers of the SFFD have recently expressed their belief that a CERT would be beneficial in Santa Fe, but actions have not yet been taken to represent these concerns. Primarily, Fire Chief Chris Rivera expressed his desire to fill the position of emergency manager, and then to begin work on the creation of a CERT. He furthered that the Emergency Management Director of the City and County of Santa Fe had done some work on the creation of a CERT, but he knew nothing of the extent of development, nor the access to such a team should it exist (C. Rivera, personal communication, November 21, 2006).

*To what extent could CERTs contribute to the disaster response capability of the SFFD?*

The comments and actions by the emergency managers in the Santa Fe area indicate the desire to have a CERT (S. Nolde, personal communication, October 10, 2006; C. Rivera, personal communication, October 10, 2006; M. Vigil, personal communication, November 27, 2006). In addition, the creation of Citizen Corps and the organization of CERT at the federal level reveals the importance that the government is placing on citizen involvement should the response to a disaster be necessary. As such, it must be assumed that a CERT would contribute to the disaster response capability of the SFFD. An emergency manager who was working with a Citizen Corps Council at the state level would enable a consistent and more comprehensive response from emergency agencies and citizen volunteers alike. Experience shows that the SFFD must first work to assess the communities’ resources and funding, work to ensure funding for a CERT, and encourage stakeholder involvement. Furthermore, the guides to training could be
compiled from those agencies that have already gone through the development process (Bertone, 2006; Borden & Lee, 2004; Campbell, 2004a; Campbell, 2004b; Citizen Corps, n.d.; Haddow & Bullock, 2006; Wagman, 2003a).

Once developed, the research indicates a clear benefit to the proper use of CERT. CERT-LA has proven that CERTs can be used to staff routine events to get worth out of investments. Furthermore, the experiences by CERT-LA and in San Francisco indicate that CERT can be used to contribute to the disaster response capabilities of fire departments during disasters. Communities such as Chandler, Arizona have followed the trend of the creation of and belief in CERT (Gresser, 2005; Kelly, 2003). The Chandler CERT Council identified four keys to success which might help Santa Fe in design: 1) use local emergency responders to provide CERT training; 2) integrate paid employees with volunteers in annual training; 3) provide ongoing basic skill training; 4) always brief (Gresser). Despite the experiences of other localities, there is little to show to what extent a CERT can help a local fire department. In addition, the literature clearly indicated the need for local assessment and evaluation to reveal the true need for and potential success of a CERT in any community (Campbell, 2004; Citizen Corps, n.d.).

Discussion

The primary way in which residents in the United States can volunteer to assist emergency services was created by President Bush under the USA Freedom Corps program. The five divisions of Citizen Corps represent many ways in which these volunteers can be used. Tasks range from previously known administrative duties to operational tasks that are trained to volunteers in organized classes. The literature cited showed many ways in which Citizen Corps has been used by agencies in the United States. To enable the use of the five different programs under Citizen Corps, many different web sites and representatives were identified (see
Appendix). Primarily, the use of the State Citizen Corps Council representative is the most efficient way to gather information and gain access to the different resources of Citizen Corps. However, each program has its own specific contact information, references, partners, and uses (Bertone, 2006; Bingham, 2004; Bush, 2002; Citizen Corps, n.d.; USDHS, n.d.a; USDHS, n.d.b).

In addition, the characteristics and capabilities of various CERTs were identified and listed. CERT provides an opportunity for volunteers to provide operationally oriented assistance. Functionally, CERT is under Citizen Corps, which is a division of the DHS. Funding comes primarily from local agencies, but grants can be obtained from the DHS designed pathways, the private sector, and the United States Fire Administration. CERTs are organized at the local level, and training is generally provided to members and includes a mandatory 20 hour initial training and annual refresher training. Members are trained to perform operational duties such as small fire suppression, medical treatment, and search and rescue during emergencies. In addition, they are trained to assist agencies with provision of public education and program delivery such as smoke alarm distribution. At times volunteers might be asked to do administrative work such as data entry and communication provision. In more recent years, CERT members have been used to staff organized events to maintain currency and test effectiveness (Citizen Corps, n.d.).

There is also an evident desire and need for a CERT within the Santa Fe area. This sentiment was echoed by all the emergency managers who participated in this (S. Nolde, personal communication, October 10, 2006; C. Rivera, personal communication, October 10, 2006; M. Vigil, personal communication, November 27, 2006). If accepted the research offered numerous suggestions on how to successfully implement a CERT program. These included suggestions on preplanning and fostering a supportive environment, funding options, initial and
ongoing training, and possible uses outside of disaster response. It appears that a successful
framework exists on which the SFFD could build a solid CERT program.

It is clear that the creation of Citizen Corps by President Bush in response to the attacks
of September 11, 2001 created a valuable set of alternatives for volunteering in the United States.
However, the use of the five programs listed under Citizen Corps has limitations (Bertone, 2006;
Bingham, 2004; Bush, 2002; Citizen Corps, n.d.; USDHS, n.d.a; USDHS, n.d.b). First, all of the
programs are locally led; therefore, you must have the capability to organize and utilize the
volunteers of any of the programs. Second, the funding process for all of the programs is
somewhat diluted. For example, few agencies have the ability to create funds to independently
run a Citizen Corps program. As such, state representatives are generally charged with providing
access to state and federal funds (Citizen Corps). However, these funds are generally acquired
under the grant funding format, and are therefore neither guaranteed nor recurring. Thus,
planning must be done to ensure a solid and continuous funding plan. Finally, looking at these
programs does not take into account either local politics or culture. Hence, programs that work in
one community might not be feasible or effective in another. Programs must be individually
assessed, analyzed, and initiated for use in a community. Recommendations for use must be
reserved until a local assessment has been made.

Despite the limitations of this research, there is still a clear link between the data obtained
by this research and the core values of the discipline of public administration. To remain
effective, a government must select the best mechanism for providing safety and security. This
research has identified CERT as a valuable tool for a government to be effective in providing for
response to disasters and emergencies, and has provided alternatives to CERT. Furthermore,
CERT and other identified alternatives to traditional fire department response will allow a
government to manage public resources to achieve the greatest output for the least input, thus remaining efficient.

By identifying the capabilities and limitations of a CERT or other alternatives, this research intended to allow governments to remain accountable to the public by following best practices for public safety provision. Furthermore, the data compiled and presented within this research might help equality and equity in service across jurisdictional boundaries. For example, equality refers to the intention to provide the same treatment in the provision of public services; by using the contacts and data listed within this research an emergency manager could provide the same level of disaster response in any area. Furthermore, the use of CERT or an alternative would help governments to remain equitable, and similar emergency and disaster response would be allocated and available to all parts of the United States. The intent of this research was to provide a way for these core values to be exhibited with the provision of enhanced disaster response.

Recommendations

This research identified general alternatives that have been used by agencies in other countries and within the United States. For instance, Citizen Corps is a nationwide program that identifies five ways in which volunteers can be used by emergency response agencies, and the ways in which these programs can be implemented and applied. However, these programs are not tailored for specific agencies or communities. Therefore, agencies that are considering using any of these programs should first investigate the effectiveness of each program in relation to their specific situation. It would be advisable to compare alternatives in a specific community and a specific agency prior to implementation.
Once initiated, agencies wishing to use any of these programs should identify funding alternatives for ongoing use of volunteer programs. In general, the programs listed under Citizen Corps are funded by grants, and most need little funding for ongoing use. For instance, USA on Watch has little need for additional funding once the initial set up of Neighborhood Watch has occurred. In addition, Volunteers in Police Services and Fire Corps match specific skills which the volunteer already possesses to tasks that they will perform. Therefore, funds would be needed for orientation, but would be relatively infrequent after inception. Similarly, Medical Reserve Corps units would rarely require funds in the absence of an emergency or disaster. In contrast, CERTs require ongoing training that must be accounted for when planning and budgeting. This ongoing funding must be planned for accordingly.

In addition to securing funding, if a CERT is to be used, agencies must develop policies and procedures for their use. Since volunteers of a CERT are frequently asked to perform operational roles, their capabilities and limitations must be clearly defined prior to implementation. These policies would ensure a safer response, clear roles and responsibilities, and a clear delineation between the tasks that are performed by a volunteer, and tasks that are performed by existing emergency response agencies. Furthermore, a training program would have to be developed and followed. Many of the listed examples could be used as a template for program creation.

Ultimately, any program used must integrate volunteers with the existing emergency response agencies. Therefore, team work must be fostered throughout the design, development, and implementation of the chosen program. It is highly recommended to encourage active participation by all involved agencies from the onset. A more comprehensive look during the development process is sure to allow for the most efficient program delivery.
Finally, future research might be needed to compare the different alternatives that provide a qualitative and quantitative base of comparison. Emergency managers with experience using the listed alternatives might be interviewed to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of various alternatives. To accomplish this, research must first be done to determine a way in which to compare the various alternatives. Once the scale of comparison is determined, a reliable and fair comparison could be made that would reveal an even more comprehensive comparison.

The need for a CERT in Santa Fe is clear, and examples of its potential uses have been outlined in this research. The SFFD must now take the information contained within this research, and use it to formulate an action plan for the creation of a CERT. To accomplish this, funding sources must be identified, and the local emergency managers must use their influence and networking to successfully implement the program. In summary, the emergency managers should assume the additional role of leader in citizen involvement, as there is a need for an organized approach within the Santa Fe area.
Reference List


## Appendix

### Citizen Corps Contacts

#### Citizen Corps - CERT

http://www.citizencorps.gov/CERT

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<tr>
<th>Training</th>
<th>Initial</th>
<th>Ongoing</th>
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<td>Communications</td>
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<tr>
<td>NM Citizen Corps State Council</td>
<td>NM Citizen Corps State Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kennie Warren, Program Manager</td>
<td>Kennie Warren, Program Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>P.O. Box 1628 #13 Bataan Boulevard</td>
<td>P.O. Box 1628 #13 Bataan Boulevard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Santa Fe, NM 87504-1628</td>
<td>Santa Fe, NM 87504-1628</td>
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<tr>
<td>(505)476-9690</td>
<td>(505)476-9690</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:kennie.warren@state.nm.us">kennie.warren@state.nm.us</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:kennie.warren@state.nm.us">kennie.warren@state.nm.us</a></td>
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