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Phoenix Citizen Corps Committee

Governor Janet Napolitano has proclaimed September 2005 as Arizona Preparedness Month. As Arizona assists with Katrina victims, there is more focus on the CERT Program

Governor Janet Napolitano proclaims September 2005 as Arizona Preparedness Month

As a result of September 11, 2001, September has been proclaimed as National Preparedness month. It is a time when Americans are asked to take stock of whatever emergency supplies they should have on hand. On August 11, 2005, Governor Janet Napolitano proclaimed September 2005 as Arizona Preparedness Month. The following is a copy of that proclamation:

Whereas, the State of Arizona experiences severe weather, floods and wildfires every year, that can cause property damage and threaten the safety of Arizona residents; and

Whereas, the concern of foreign and domestic terrorism has caused all Americans to re-evaluate their levels of preparedness; and

Whereas, the citizens of Arizona need to be prepared for emergencies in their homes, businesses and schools and encouraged to develop disaster plans with their families; and

Whereas, state agencies and state employees should be prepared so they can educate others and provide help during and after a disaster; and

Whereas, residents should familiarize themselves with all emergency resources and agencies available to them, including Arizona 211 On line; and

Whereas, the State of Arizona has joined with the Grand Canyon Chapter, the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the Arizona Humane Society, Arizona Citizen Corps Council, Arizona Commission of Indian Affairs, Arizona Statewide Independent Living Council, Arizona Office of Americans with Disabilities, Arizona Office of Homeland Security, the Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs, the Arizona Department of Health Service, the Arizona Department of Insurance, the United States Postal Service Arizona and the National Weather Service among others, in recognizing the need for broad public education program about being prepared.

Now, Therefore, I Janet Napolitano, Governor of the State of Arizona, do hereby proclaim September 2005 as Arizona Preparedness Month.

Should citizens find themselves in an emergency situation, either as a result of a terrorist attack or a natural disaster, specific steps can be taken to mitigate the effects of that situation. For more information on tips on how to prepare for an emergency, log on to www.dem.state.az.us/azserc/



**City of Phoenix
Homeland Defense Bureau**

Katrina and CERT

Hurricane Katrina, the most devastating natural disaster to affect the United States in the last 100 years sent over 1 million residents of the Gulf Coast away from their homes, jobs and loved ones. As many citizens watched storm coverage on various news channels, no one dreamed that events would unfold as they did.

As shelters were set up in Houston, Texas, Baton Rouge, Louisiana and other cities near the Gulf regions, it became apparent (at almost lightning speed) that the sheer numbers of evacuees needing assistance overwhelmed these facilities. Federal officials scrambled to find other locations to transport those in need. The State of Arizona was called upon to help – and Operation Good Neighbor was initiated.

A Type II Incident Command Team was deployed and charged with setting up the Veterans Memorial Coliseum as an official shelter to which victims of Katrina could come to and receive assistance. The Arizona Red Cross and the Arizona Department of Public Safety were assigned security detail and assigning other volunteer groups to various tasks. One of those groups was a group of citizens trained in disaster emergency response through the CERT program.

Although the City of Phoenix CERT members initially staffed the CERT command center, CERT volunteers represented jurisdictions throughout the Valley: Daisy Mountain, Goodyear, Glendale, Chandler, Mesa and Tempe.

The CERT command center was staffed around the clock – a task true to the nature of disasters.

As time went on, CERT members were called up on to do a variety of tasks – assisting with badging procedures, helping with transport to Sky Harbor airport and assisting with meals. The primary request dealt with escorting newly arriving evacuees and helping them with the registration process. Many “visitors” arrived in various emotional and physical conditions. Many were still in shock and some sustained injuries they received during the storm. CERT members treated the visitors with kindness, patience and a sincere desire to help.

Although many church and volunteer groups helped with activities at the Coliseum, it was clear that CERT members had an understanding of how an incident is structured and assigned. The concepts of a “Team Leader” and the “buddy system” came in to focus and were used exclusively. Mike Mallory, a City of Phoenix CERT member who functioned as a Team Leader for many of the day shifts, stated that working as a team leader enabled him to hear interesting stories from the evacuees. “I enjoyed talking with the evacuees – my heart really goes out to the kids affected by this disaster.” The whole experience has helped him personally by better preparing at home for disasters.

Andy Brazie, a CERT member from Goodyear said, “The overall organization of the CERT teams was very impressive. It has been interesting to work with CERT members from other Valley cities and realize that we really are on the same page.”

Embe Kugler, state coordinator for Citizen Corps with Arizona Department of Emergency Management made the following observations: “When we kicked off CERT classes in 2003, no one ever expected that our CERT members would be involved by assisting victims of a hurricane that occurred in another part

of the country. The CERT members and their training have been valuable assets in the efforts of Operation Good Neighbor.”

Anthony Cox, involved with Individual Assistance for the Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs said, “I’m impressed with the willingness to work long hours and the ability to focus on the mission. Their training is excellent, as is their knowledge about the mission.”

Operation Good Neighbor was not without some tense moments. At times, confusion prevailed with many CERT members not clearly understanding as to who was assigned to specific roles and responsibilities. One of those responsibilities was the process of registering and badging the volunteers. Steve Bold, with Arizona State Department of Administration is perhaps the most vocal champion of the CERT program and its members. Blessed with the patience of a saint, Mr. Bold stated that without CERT members, the badging procedure would have been complete chaos. He was extremely impressed with the “training and flexibility to serve in a multitude of capacities and different functions.” He was also very appreciative of Don Peyton, CERT Program Manager for the Phoenix Fire Department and his management of the CERT members.

The secret of their success is certainly **not** a secret. Anyone who has operated in the emergency services universe in the state of Arizona understands the importance of a command structure. Incident command is a science that must be practiced and perfected so that when called upon, tasks and assignments are carried out as calmly and seamlessly as possible. It became obvious that CERT members were one of the few groups operating with a solid command structure.

Clearly, in the face of a national tragedy and operating in an environment of confusion, CERT members can be proud of the services and assistance they

provided during Arizona’s Operation Good Neighbor

In future editions, CERT members who assisted with Operation Good Neighbor will be named and thanked individually, but until then, a heartfelt “thanks” goes out to all those who helped!

House Bill 3736

As a result of Katrina, the United States House of Representatives passed H.B. 3736, which protects the volunteers assisting with the victims of Hurricane Katrina. This bill will be called the “Katrina Volunteer Protection Act of 2005”. Although it passed the House, it is currently making its way through the United States Senate. Observers are optimistic that this bill will pass successfully. It may serve as a template for a more comprehensive act that would cover volunteers for future disasters.

Blue Cross Blue Shield Training

The company that provides training manuals for CERT members has requested CERT training for its employees. Over 60 employees have been trained, with more classes planned for the future. We extend our gratitude to Blue Cross Blue Shield for its ongoing support of the program!

CERT Training

As a result of the local response to aid victims of Hurricane Katrina, there has been a surge of interest from citizens about attending CERT training. As volunteers from other agencies observed the command structure practiced by our members, many were impressed by the ease our volunteers carried out their assignments. As a result, three additional classes have been scheduled in October for CERT. To CERT members Valley-

wide..... **Thank You!**