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| **For immediate release** | **Contact: Ben Thompson** |
| **Carnation-Duvall Citizen Corps** | **cert@cdccc.us** |

**Panic town? Not with this training**

Writing in the San Diego Union-Tribune, Nicole Miller-Coleman interviews CALFIRE Captain Matthew Hayes about Community Emergency Response Team training. Excerpt follows:

Five compelling reasons to sign up for CERT training:

1. Improve your ability to think clearly when it really counts

The fate of people who initially survive a disaster has a lot to do with the decisions they make immediately after. “Think about it,” Hayes ventured, “There is an earthquake. It knocks out all infrastructure. Where is your mind at?” CERT training increases situational awareness and the likelihood trainees will be able to think clearly through a disaster.

2. Increase the likelihood you and your family remain safe

9-1-1 works really well in an emergency setting,” said Hayes, “but if there is a major catastrophe, 9-1-1 will get saturated with calls and first responders will have to prioritize.” CERT trainees who learn what to do to help themselves are more self-reliant, and by extension, safer.

3. Keep yourself safe while assisting others

Hayes cites the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City as a tragic lesson for first responders and the community. “Hundreds of people perished while trying to rescue others. We don’t want people dying trying to save other people.”

4. Free up first responders to assist more critical needs

Hayes uses a “bullseye model” to illustrate. Think of a target with concentric circles. You are the center — or bullseye. The next ring represents your partner and/or family. Extending outward from the center is the community. A wider circle means less reliance on first responders who, in turn, can assist those with more critical need. Hayes notes, “Some people can only take care of themselves and their family, and that’s ok.”

5. Makes communities stronger and more resilient

When a community has individuals with CERT training, more lives may be saved, and the faster a community may recover from a disaster.

The CERT curriculum consists of 20 hours of hands-on training in a variety of topics, including emergency communications, storm evacuation, light search and rescue, basic firefighting, basic medical treatment, assessing damage to buildings and caring for pets during disasters. There is even a training component on how to respond to terrorism.

Interested in CERT?

Carnation-Duvall Citizen Corps presents a Community Emergency Response Team class – eight Monday evenings in Carnation starting February 26. Access a registration form at http://www.cdccc.us/cert-classes.