Program Guide: Online Basic CERT Course Delivery

For CERT Program Leaders and Instructors

Thoroughly read this document as well as the Instructor Guidance - CERT Skills Checklist document.

This online Basic CERT course is a comprehensive lecture portion of all 9 units of the national standardized curriculum, available in English and Spanish, and is hoped to prepare the student as well as possible for the practical hands-on portion which will be planned and delivered by the local registered CERT program.

The local registered CERT program has students sign up on the programs course registration portal, and afterwards provides the students the information to take the course online. The students then go to this website, https://OnlineCERT.org, and follow the directions to start the online course, and takes the lecture portion of the course online (about 12 hours), learning at their own pace and convenience. Once completed the student will be prompted to print and submit a certificate of online portion completion to their local registered CERT program. The registered CERT program will plan a practical day (about 16 hours) where they will conduct, and the student will pass off, all the hands on skills in the course, learn about local plans, and participate in a disaster simulation. The local program determines the parameters for this practical portion. The in-person practical portion may be completed in 16 hours but must be adequate to complete each required practical in order for a certificate of full course completion to be given. See Instructor Guidance - CERT Skills Checklist for comprehensive list of practical's needing to be passed off. The students use the Participant CERT Skills Checklist to pass off each skill.

Understand that not everyone can take a learning course online, whether for lack of technological infrastructure, or for physical or mental limitations. For this reason it may be necessary to hold a traditional in-person Basic CERT Course every once in a while. However, for those who are comfortable with online courses, this tool can help provide learning through the standardized curriculum at the convenience and pace of the individual. Using this tool allows an individual to start the CERT training any time, 365 days a year, and finishes their training with their local program on scheduled practical hands-on days. Students can access the online course on their smart devices or computer, and take the course at their own pace and convenience. The online course progress will be saved and can be resumed at the students' convenience. This strategy may also help reduce common CERT course delivery barriers such as time commitment for instructors and students. The use of this strategy may also make this training available to those commonly unable to take the traditional course, such as mothers, youth, or individuals at work or school. This tool may also be useful for traditional classes whose students need to make up a missed unit.

It has been found that administering the Online Basic CERT Course and hands-on practical portion of the course in the ways this document suggests, that there is little to no gap in the students learning of the principles in the online lecture portion and the application of those principles in the hands-on practical portion of the training. It is also found that students adequately build relations and form as a team within the 16 hours of classroom time, and that student learning and retention may be greater than that of the traditional approach. Students must stay engaged with the online learning management system in order to advance in the curriculum, followed by multi-media, knowledge quizzes and end of unit tests. The student has to get 70% or higher in their unit quizzes and final exam in order to complete the online portion. Also, in the practical portion of the training each skill has to be checked off by an instructor and specifically provides a hands-on experience for each skill. This course delivery strategy necessitates having more instructors in the classroom environment for effective learning, coaching of skills, and time management; however the local program will see that training administrative costs go down, and administrative time commitment decrease by about half. This training strategy validates the need for having instructors attend the CERT Train-The-Trainer Course, and the need for instructors to have a sound understanding of the skills they are to coach the students in. If following administrative best practices the local program may see an improvement in course completion rates. This format has shown heightened student engagement and high energy for all 16 classroom hours, and an increase in the students overall value of the course, which has a direct, long term, positive impact on the CERT program.

The following details will help in implementing this course delivery strategy.

Administrative Best Practices for Preparing for the Course: Setting up your registration system, scheduling, advertising, and communicating with registered students.

- 1st create your own registration portal: See example registration template you can copy from (via Google Form), and notice the characteristics of the content post registration on the provided template.
    - o Important Note: If the local program broadcasts the online training link prior to capturing the contact info of interested individuals, then the program manager or instructors will not have any way of knowing who is taking the online training and will not have a way of communicating with them. These best practices mitigate against this issue and empowers the program with the ability to communicate with those interested.
- 2nd plan and schedule the days, times and location to hold your practical hands-on portion of the course (at least 16 hours worth of classroom time). The preference is two 8 hour days, but may be broken up in other ways that best fit needs. Consider giving the students plenty of time to complete the online portion, and plenty of classroom time to adequately address each skill.
- 3rd use the schedule and location details, and your registration link to create a public message to broadcast the training opportunity to the community. See example template you can use (editable version provided on the shared drive).
    - o Another option is to make a public message that is not specific to a day or time to allow for use any time of year, however it may be necessary to update the day and time information on the registration link; or at least to get students started on the online training, post registration, and then announce hands-on dates at a later time. This way students can get started online any time, 365 days a year, and as you announce hands on training dates to those who have registered they can confirm attendance to those dates at that time.
- 4th broadcast your public message and see individual's signup. Post registration is the best time to provide the online training link (http://tiny.cc/certonline).
- 5th once individuals have signed up, now you have information to be able to communicate with them, so be sure to provide them the link to start the online course and any other pertinent information they need to know, such as the in-class practical hands-on days, times and location, and any other expectations.
- 6th provide plenty of reminders for the individual to complete the online portion and to come to the hands on portion with their proof of online completion. It can be expected that individuals will procrastinate or forget, so reminder emails and a scheduled calendar invite for the classroom practical portion may be very helpful.
    - o Important Note: It is important for the student to bring proof of online completion to the practical portion of the training so that an instructor can verify and check off that step. A best practice is to have the students complete the entire online portion prior to the first day of the practical portion of the training. It is up to the local program to determine how they will schedule the hands-on practical portion of the training. It has been reported that it seems to work best in two 8 hour days. If the local program decides to break the 16 hours down into smaller segments, best results have been found to have the students complete the entire online course prior to the first day of class. If the local program decides not to do this they may find the following common side effects: students that did not complete the online segment assigned, and many student questions that show a lack of pre-exposure to principles necessary for doing the hands-on practical portion of the training.

Administrative Best Practices for the Hands-On Practical Portion of the Course: Preparing for and conducting the classroom hands-on practical portion of the training.

- Use the Instructor Guide – CERT Skills Checklist and the Basic CERT Course Instructor Guide to prepare the supplies, scenarios, etc. needed for each activity.
- Assign a lead instructor to act as a facilitator in the front of the classroom to direct the flow of each activity and to manage time. The Class Facilitator will use the Instructor Guide – CERT Skills Checklist and your created agenda to keep the class on track (See sample agenda for practical portion of the CERT Course). Some activities may be conducted as an entire class where the Class Facilitator may lead out on the activity. Other activities may be best in small groups where an instructor leads the activity in the small group. Some activities may be a combination of both approaches. It may be useful to have an additional facilitator to help manage the training materials needed per activity.

- Assign students into groups with an instructor. It is best to keep the instructor to student ratio to no more than 6 students per every one instructor, and the students paired in groups of 2 or 3. This way students can be adequately observed and coached to ensure the skill the student performed was done correctly, and then the instructor can with good conscience sign off the skill that student performed. This is also a good practice to help with time management. The Small Group Instructor will use the Instructor Guide – CERT Skills Checklist and your created agenda to keep on track (See sample agenda for practical portion of the CERT Course), and any other prepared materials, like scenarios, to be used in any of the activities. The Small Group Instructor will follow the Class Facilitators guidance.
- Provide each student with their own copy of the Participant CERT Skills Checklist and class agenda. It is best if the student maintains responsibility for their own checklist. During class, instructors may be tempted to keep the checklist, but doing so will make it difficult for the student to follow along. This checklist may be turned in at the end with all the signatures to verify course completion and should be returned to the student for their own records. This could be returned to the student as they receive their official certificate of course completion at graduation. Students that do not complete all the skills need to keep their CERT Skills Checklist with existing signatures. It is best if the student is responsible for following up with another course on another date to complete the course and receive all missing signatures on their CERT Skills Checklist. Once all signatures verify completion then a CERT Program Manager may present a certificate of course completion.
- Provide each student with their own copy of the Basic CERT Course Participant Manual. The online course references to the electronic manual throughout the online training, however the student may not have received a physical copy until now. The physical copy can act as a reference throughout the practical's and also from then on throughout the individuals' life.
- Introduce them to their Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) if you are providing it. Direct community members to bring their own PPE if your program is not providing it.
- Conduct an ice breaker activity to encourage interaction among the students. This should be short and simple.
- Conduct and sign off skills from each unit in the Basic CERT Course. There are 70 items to be signed off (13 hrs of skills and 3 hrs for the Disaster Simulation). It's best to move sequentially starting from #5 in Unit 1. #1 is best completed at the beginning. #2 and 3 may be completed any time that makes the most sense, commonly at the end, and #4 is completed at the end.
  - Important Note (Little to no lecturing or power points, focus on hands on): Because the lecture portion was satisfied in the online environment, and because there are 70 skills that need to be checked off in 16 hours worth of time, *there is no time for lecturing*. Instructors tend to default to the traditional format of teaching and lecturing, so prepare for a learning curve. Little to no power points are used in the classroom portion. In this format the instructors' role is to point the students to their manuals as a reference for the skill, describe the skill, demonstrate the skill, and then coach the students as they perform the skill. Then once the skill is performed satisfactorily, then the instructor can in good conscience sign off that skill on the students CERT Skills Checklist.
  - This may require a brief review of each skill. The instructor should be prepared to describe the skill, demonstrate the skill, and then have the individual do the skill with instructor coaching. This is in line with CERT Train-The-Trainer guidelines. See Instructor Guide – CERT Skills Checklist
  - Each skill will need to be signed off by an instructor on the Participant CERT Skills Checklist.
- Discuss any specific local hazards and official plans for CERT use in your area, including your local CERT policies and protocols. Referencing to the local Emergency Operation Plan and showing how CERT fits in the plan may be beneficial. See #2 in the Instructor Guide – CERT Skills Checklist and the Participant CERT Skills Checklist.
- Discuss details on any opportunities for individuals to get further involved in the CERT Program or other programs, if applicable. Also include any additional training opportunities for CERT members, ie. any FEMA CERT add-on modules, hazard specific training, Red Cross, or other local, state, or federal provided courses. See #3 in the Instructor Guide – CERT Skills Checklist and the Participant CERT Skills Checklist.
- Conduct the mock disaster (3 hrs). See Instructor Guide – CERT Skills Checklist for disaster sim suggested layout.
  - The test is satisfactorily completed through the online course; the review is completed with the practical's.
  - Once the individual has passed off each skill, then they should participate in a mock disaster as planed and advertised by the local registered CERT Program. This may happen at the end of the second day.

Public promotion: It's advised to actively promote the registered CERT programs Basic CERT course through a variety of ways. The most effective way will be through public gatherings where you can conduct a presentation on what CERT is and why it's valuable for the individual and community, and provide registration flyers that direct individuals interested to sign up with the local program so they can take the online course and subsequent practical portion. You can also promote through your community news, webpages, and social media. See sample flyer for public promotion. An editable version of the flyer is provided in the shared folder. Also use sample CERT videos/PSA's for introducing CERT in public gatherings. Also turn your public promotion flyer into a JPG or PNG for promotion use on websites or social media and be sure to link the picture to the place individuals can go to register for the course.

Course Completion Certificate: Once the online portion is completed and proof of completion is provided, and all units and skills are satisfactorily completed and signed off by an Instructor, and once the individual has participated in a mock disaster where they practice the skills they have learned, then an official certificate of course completion will be issued by the official registered CERT Program. The local CERT Program will maintain all records at the local level. See sample certificate your program is welcome use, and be sure to include your sponsoring agencies logos.

After Course Completion: Team building and retaining what's been learned doesn't happen on a one time basis. It is encouraged to conduct refreshers and team building activities on a regular basis. It is up to the local registered CERT program to determine what that entails. It is also up to the individual on how involved they want to be. Some may take the course for their own benefit, others may take the course and show interest in getting further involved. Both options are great. If further interest is communicated, it's important for the program to have a way for volunteers to get involved and a role to fill. This is up to the local CERT Program and sponsoring agency to determine what volunteer roles are needed. The CERT Program Managers Course will help program leaders develop a sustainable program plan so they can utilize volunteers in the best ways possible.

Other creative ways this tool could be used: The Traditional Basic CERT Course is delivered as an in-person class completing all 9 units and is based off the nationally recognized Basic CERT Instructor Guide and Participant Manual. Adequate time has to be given in order to fully complete all 9 units. This typically takes 24-30 hrs of classroom contact time and is typically split up into 3hrs an evening once a week over the span of 8 or 9 weeks.

- **Make up's:** For those who take the traditional in-person Basic CERT Course but miss a unit, you can direct that individual to make up said unit through the online CERT training, print off and submit proof of unit completion and then work with an instructor to pass off the associated skills in that unit. Proof of unit completion would be a printed screen shot of the unit quiz results showing a passing score of a minimum of 70%.
- And/or, the instructor could use the online curriculum for a selected unit in place of themselves acting as the presenter. In this case the presenter simply acts as a facilitator in a group setting, simply running the online course in front of the group and then conducts the associated skills with the students in the classroom at the appropriate times.

Link to all documents available for download and use:

https://goo.gl/xns9V9