



IEMA highlights role of volunteers in disasters

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SPRINGFIELD – Volunteers can provide critical assistance in disaster preparedness, response and recovery efforts in Illinois. Throughout April, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and local emergency management agencies will highlight ways Illinois residents can help their communities be more resilient.

“Before disaster strikes, volunteers can promote personal preparedness so that people in their communities can stay safe during emergencies,” said IEMA Director James K. Joseph. When a disaster strikes, voluntary organizations help people in their community, region or across the country. Volunteers even play a vital role in ensuring the long-term recovery of a community affected by a disaster.”

Joseph said more than 50 communities have established Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) that have been used to help make their communities safer, stronger and better prepared to respond to and recover from emergencies.

Nearly 100 local CERT members recently participated in a day of training during the seventh annual Prairie State CERT Challenge at Joliet Junior College in Joliet. The event was sponsored by IEMA and hosted by Will County Emergency Management Agency.

The day's activities involved training focused on disaster recovery activities, such as damage assessments, donations management, spontaneous volunteers and Multi-Agency Resource Centers. These training topics reflect activities CERT members have assisted with following several recent disasters in Illinois and are likely to assist with in future emergencies.

Disaster volunteer opportunities vary from community to community. People interested in learning more about how to volunteer to help before, during or after a disaster can contact local voluntary organizations or their local emergency management agency for information about opportunities in their area.