



Temecula Ready

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The CERT Legacy in Temecula

Disaster preparedness in the United States did not begin with a single program or policy. It evolved over generations—shaped by fires, wars, earthquakes, and one defining national moment: September 11, 2001.

From those experiences emerged a guiding principle that continues to shape communities like Temecula today: *Prepared communities save lives.*

Before CERT: The Evolution of Preparedness

Long before modern emergency management systems existed, disaster response in the United States was largely reactive. One of the earliest examples of federal involvement came in 1803, when Congress passed legislation to assist a New Hampshire town after a devastating fire—marking the beginning of federal disaster relief efforts.¹

By the early 20th century, preparedness began to take on a more organized form. During World War I, the federal government created the Council of National Defense to help coordinate national resources and civilian support for the war effort.² That concept expanded significantly during World War II with the establishment of the Office of Civilian Defense, which introduced nationwide programs such as air raid warning systems, blackout drills, and volunteer training.³

Following World War II, preparedness shifted toward the growing threat of nuclear attack. In 1950, President Harry S. Truman established the Federal Civil Defense Administration, launching the first nationwide effort to prepare civilians for catastrophic events.⁴ Public education campaigns, fallout shelter programs, warning systems, and evacuation planning became central features of preparedness during the Cold War.

By the 1960s and 1970s, however, repeated natural disasters—including earthquakes, hurricanes, and floods—began to reshape emergency management philosophy. Preparedness gradually expanded into an all-hazards approach, recognizing that communities needed to prepare for both natural and man-made disasters.⁵

This transition culminated in 1979 when President Jimmy Carter created the Federal Emergency Management Agency, consolidating numerous federal disaster functions into a single agency focused on preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation.⁶

Yet even as emergency management matured, one critical gap remained unresolved:

How could ordinary citizens safely help themselves and others during the critical hours before professional responders arrived?

From Local Innovation to a Proven Model

That question became the focus of the Los Angeles Fire Department in the mid-1980s.

In 1985, under the leadership of Assistant Fire Chief Frank Borden, LAFD confronted a difficult operational reality: in a catastrophic earthquake or major disaster, emergency services would be overwhelmed almost immediately, leaving residents on their own during the most critical period.⁷

Rather than relying solely on theory, LAFD officials studied disasters firsthand.



Preparedness

In February 1985, a delegation traveled to Japan to examine its highly organized neighborhood-based preparedness system. There, they observed citizens pre-trained in specific disaster roles such as fire suppression, medical aid, and rescue operations. During their visit, an earthquake struck. Trained civilians demonstrated they could function safely and effectively during emergencies.⁸

Later that same year, a magnitude 8.1 earthquake devastated Mexico City. Early reports listed thousands dead, with later assessments placing the toll at approximately 10,000. In the absence of organized civilian training, thousands of spontaneous volunteers rushed to assist rescue efforts. Many succeeded in saving lives, but they often worked under extremely dangerous conditions—unstable buildings, aftershocks, dust, fire, and limited equipment. According to early CERT historical accounts developed by the Los Angeles Fire Department, *more than 100 untrained volunteers died* while attempting rescue operations in collapsed structures.⁸

The tragedy reinforced a central lesson that would shape the development of CERT: Civilian response is inevitable—training determines whether it saves lives or creates additional risk.



Emergency workers carry hospital patient after rescuing him from the rubble of Mexico City's Juarez Hospital, which was destroyed by an earthquake, Sept. 26, 1985. Historical photo used for editorial and educational purposes. (AP Photo/Jack Smith)

Designing CERT: A Deliberate Approach

In 1986, LAFD transformed those lessons into a structured pilot program designed to train civilians in essential disaster response skills.⁹

Unlike Japan's specialized neighborhood teams, LAFD made a deliberate decision to create multi-functional teams, believing American communities required volunteers who could adapt to a variety of situations.

Training focused on:

- Fire suppression using portable extinguishers
- Light search and rescue
- Basic medical care and triage
- Team organization and evacuation

The initial pilot group demonstrated that civilians could be trained to operate safely, follow direction, and contribute meaningfully during emergencies. Following its success, LAFD established a dedicated Disaster Preparedness Division, formally institutionalizing the program.⁹

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT): A Real-World Test

On October 1, 1987, the Whittier Narrows earthquake struck Southern California, providing real-world validation of the CERT concept.¹⁰

Although moderate in size, the earthquake strained emergency resources and reinforced the reality that professional responders could not immediately reach everyone in a large-scale incident.

The event accelerated the expansion of CERT training and confirmed the importance of a prepared civilian population.

By the late 1980s, the core principles of CERT had been firmly established:

- Civilians are the immediate responders
- Training must emphasize safety and simplicity
- Volunteers must operate as organized teams
- Their role is to support—not replace—professional responders

Those principles remain central to CERT programs today.

From Local Program to National Strategy

In 1993, the Federal Emergency Management Agency adopted CERT as a national program, expanding it into an all-hazards training model used throughout the United States.¹¹

But the next major evolution in community preparedness would come after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

After 9/11: The Creation of Citizen Corps

Following the attacks, President George W. Bush called for greater citizen involvement in preparedness and homeland security.

In January 2002, he announced the creation of the Citizen Corps initiative, designed to engage everyday Americans in prevention, preparedness, and response efforts.¹² Organized through FEMA and the newly created Department of Homeland Security, Citizen Corps established local councils intended to bring together emergency managers, fire services, law enforcement, healthcare organizations, schools, businesses, and volunteers into a coordinated preparedness structure.

Citizen Corps also unified several key volunteer programs¹³:

- Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)
- Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)
- Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS)
- Neighborhood Watch
- Fire Corps

The objective was not simply volunteerism—it was integration. Citizens would become part of an organized preparedness system aligned with professional emergency response.

The National CERT Association

As CERT programs expanded nationwide, the need for stronger coordination and information sharing led to the formation of the National CERT Association.

The organization was formally established in 2019 in partnership with FEMA and CERT leaders from across the country.¹⁴ Its mission is to support preparedness, response, and recovery efforts through leadership development, training, and collaboration among CERT programs nationwide.

The Association organizes the annual National CERT Conference, which has become a key gathering point for CERT volunteers, instructors, emergency managers, and program coordinators from across the United States.¹⁶



Temecula Citizen Corps: Local Readiness in Action

Inspired by the Citizen Corps initiative, the City of Temecula established the Temecula Citizen Corps (TCC) in the early 2000s. The program quickly gained recognition for its proactive approach to community preparedness and public safety partnership. On January 21, 2004, Congressman Darrell Issa formally recognized Temecula in the United States House of Representatives, issuing a proclamation praising the city's leadership and commitment to homeland security and community preparedness. In his remarks, Issa stated, "I rise today to recognize and praise the people of the City of Temecula, who are doing their duty, as citizens, public servants, and elected officials, to make our homes and communities more secure..." The recognition highlighted Temecula's early commitment to citizen preparedness and its efforts to build strong partnerships between residents, volunteers, and public safety agencies.¹⁶

Early priorities included:

- Training residents in disaster response
- Promoting neighborhood and household preparedness
- Promoting Neighborhood Watch programs

Over time, TCC expanded beyond traditional CERT training into a broader operational support organization serving both the community and public safety agencies. In addition to disaster preparedness education and volunteer Neighborhood Watch, TCC members now support a variety of public safety and emergency management functions.¹⁷

First Responder Rehab: One of the program's most visible roles has been supporting first responders during extended emergency incidents through firefighter rehabilitation operations. Working alongside fire service and law enforcement personnel, trained volunteers assist with logistics, hydration support, cooling operations, accountability, and rehabilitation area setup during major incidents and periods of extreme heat.

Emergency Communications: In recent years, TCC has significantly expanded its emergency communications capabilities to support both disaster response and continuity of operations during communications outages. Volunteers have been trained to operate the City's 400 MHz handheld radio system, providing interoperable field communications and support during

Preparedness

incidents, exercises, and community events. At the same time, TCC has developed a growing amateur radio emergency communications program that includes voice and digital communications capabilities. Through the use of amateur radio repeaters, portable radio systems, and Winlink—a worldwide radio email system capable of transmitting messages without internet or cellular service—TCC volunteers can provide resilient backup communications when conventional systems are overloaded or unavailable. This layered communications approach reflects a growing recognition nationwide that reliable emergency communications are essential to effective disaster response and community resilience.

Drone Program: TCC has also expanded into emerging technologies through the development of a volunteer drone program designed to support situational awareness, aerial reconnaissance, and emergency management operations. Operating in coordination with city leadership and public safety agencies, the program reflects the growing role of unmanned aircraft systems in modern emergency response.

Community Support: Beyond disaster operations, TCC volunteers frequently support community events throughout Temecula by providing first aid services, public safety support, emergency communications, and preparedness outreach during large public gatherings and civic events.

This evolution reflects the broader mission of Citizen Corps itself: building a trained, organized volunteer capability that strengthens community resilience while supporting professional emergency services.

Organization and Operational Role

Today, Temecula Citizen Corps operates as an integrated component of the City's emergency management structure. Its organization includes:

- Oversight by the Office of Emergency Management
- Coordination with fire services, law enforcement, and city leadership
- Volunteer units including CERT and emergency communications

Members are trained not only in individual preparedness skills but also in team-based operations aligned with the Incident Command System (ICS).

During exercises and real-world incidents, TCC volunteers may assist with:

- Damage assessment
- Field intelligence gathering
- Emergency communications
- Community outreach and support
- Situational awareness reporting
- Firefighter rehabilitation and cooling operations during extended incidents and extreme heat events
- Establishing and supporting emergency shelter operations
- First aid and medical support during community events and emergencies
- Logistical support for emergency operations and disaster response activities

Many members serve as Disaster Service Workers, reinforcing their role as an organized extension of the city's emergency response capability.

A System Built for Reality

The evolution of preparedness—from early federal relief efforts to civil defense, from FEMA to CERT and Citizen Corps—reflects a fundamental shift in how disasters are understood.

Disasters are not managed by professionals alone. They are community-wide events, where outcomes depend on preparation at every level.

What began in Los Angeles as a response to a known operational gap has grown into a national doctrine—and a local capability here in Temecula.

When disaster strikes, response does not begin when sirens arrive.

It begins within the community.

Endnotes and Sources

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Temecula Rod Run Brings Community and Safety Together



Photo by Shawna Sarnowski for the City of Temecula

The annual Temecula Rod Run once again filled Old Town with classic cars, families, and thousands of visitors during the May 1–2 weekend celebration — and Temecula Citizen Corps was there throughout the event helping support public safety and community outreach.

On Friday night’s popular Cruise Night, TCC volunteers staffed the Event Cart as a mobile first aid station, moving throughout the crowded event area and remaining available for medical assistance, public safety support, and visitor assistance as spectators lined the streets watching hundreds of classic and custom cars cruise through Old Town Temecula.

Operations expanded on Saturday as volunteers staffed both the First Aid and Information Booth and the mobile Event Cart. Throughout the day, TCC members answered questions from the public, provided directions and event information, and stood ready to assist with any medical needs during the busy festival atmosphere.



Photo by Shawna Sarnowski for the City of Temecula

One of the highlights of the weekend was the strong community interaction at the TCC booth. Families stopped to learn more about emergency preparedness, volunteer opportunities, and the programs offered through TCC. A particularly memorable moment captured in photos featured a mother, her friend, and three excited children proudly showing off the free children’s CERT helmets they had just received from TCC volunteers.

Events such as the Rod Run provide an important opportunity for TCC volunteers to serve the community while also helping residents become more familiar with preparedness and emergency response resources available here in Temecula.



Upcoming Event



National Night Out Returns to Temecula – August 4, 2026

Join the community for this year's National Night Out on Tuesday, August 4, 2026, from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm at the Promenade Mall in Temecula.

This annual nationwide event brings together residents, public safety agencies, community organizations, and local volunteers for an evening focused on community partnership, safety awareness, and neighborhood preparedness. Visitors will have the opportunity to meet members of local law enforcement, fire services, emergency management personnel, and volunteer organizations serving the Temecula Valley.

Temecula Citizen Corps will once again participate in the event, sharing information about disaster preparedness, CERT training, emergency communications, rehabilitation support for first responders, and other volunteer opportunities that help strengthen community resilience during emergencies.

National Night Out began in 1984 as a community-building campaign designed to promote police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie. What started as a small local effort has grown into a nationwide event involving millions of residents across thousands of communities. Today, National Night Out serves as both a celebration of community spirit and a reminder that preparedness and public safety are strongest when residents and local agencies work together.

Families are encouraged to attend and enjoy exhibits, demonstrations, public safety displays, and opportunities to connect with the organizations that help keep the community prepared and safe.

Mark your calendar and stop by to visit TCC during this year's National Night Out.



**Temecula Citizen Corps
Business Meeting Minutes
Date: May 5, 2026
Location: 43230 Business Park Dr**



CALL TO ORDER Jeff Irwin at 7:00 pm.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE The pledge was led by Scott Seidman.

CONSENT CALENDAR

- Approval of the Minutes for the April 7 Business Meeting. The minutes were unanimously approved by those in attendance.

INTRODUCTIONS AND PROMOTIONS

- Members in attendance: There were 15 members in attendance: Carl Bratschko, Bruce Brunn, Jacqueline Cooper, Veronia Dining, Andrea Godoy, Jeff Irwin, Angela Johnson, Angela Little, David Matics, Alan McRoberts, Blake Noe, Yeshe Phang, Irene Powell, Jose Regueiro, and Scott Seidman.

OLD BUSINESS

- None.

NEW/CONTINUING BUSINESS

- Activation Plan.
 - Activation Plan target finalization date is June 2026.
 - Planning Team held two meetings in April.
 - Next Planning meeting is May 6 at 10:00 am.
 - › Focus is on documents.
- NERT Planning Committee.
 - Planning Committee held two meetings in April.
 - Next meeting scheduled for Wednesday, May 6, 12:00 pm.
 - › Developing “Essential” concepts posters.
 - › NERT Flyer.

The NERT flyer was distributed for member feedback at the meeting. The NERT concept was explained for new members.

STAFF REPORTS

- Social Outreach Coordinator, Angela Johnson
 - TCC social accounts have been “going live” during CERT training exercises.
 - An additional battery will be purchased to extend the time spent live.
 - Additional drone footage was suggested.
- Radio Supervisor, Mark Utley (not present), report provided by Bruce Brunn
 - A report-out was provided on the regional BEACON exercise. There were some issues with repeaters, but station 1610 am was functioning well.
 - Recommended that we work on improving coordination with the county.
- Logistics Chief, Yeshe Phang:
 - Maintenance Day, May 9, 8:00 am to 11:00 am.

- . Usual Maintenance duties.
- . OTC Inventory Complete.
 - > Status Update.
 - > Perishable items to be documented.
- . Install new front stair railings and paint – Expected Completion June 2026.
 - > Measurements taken and working plan drawn up - Complete.
 - > Initial rough cuts per plan - Complete.
 - > Final preparation (sanding/painting) - May 6.
 - > Cribbing/Demolition of current stairs/deck - May 9.
- . Weed removal needed soon.
- . Recommended inspection of fire extinguishers and replacement of units not holding pressure.
- Neighborhood Watch Coordinator, Bruce Brunn:
 - . Two Terrorism Response classes covered last month.
 - . The Neighborhood Watch display at the Temecula Community Services Expo was a success, drawing in hundreds of new public contacts.
- Training Chief, David Bever:
 - . Adult CERT – Apr 24 – 26.
 - > Recap - 18 Adult Graduates (plus 2 MSJC and 1 Teen).
 - > 4 recent graduates in attendance at this meeting.
 - . TVUSD CERT Program (Rancho Vista HS Continuation).
 - > Next Session -- August 2026.
 - . Drone Training.
 - > Status update on training: UAS in Emergency Management class has been rescheduled to September 22-23. Seats are still open but filling up quickly.
 - . Chainsaw Training/Refresher.
 - > Date & Location -- TBD.
 - . TCC Training Meeting -- EmComm Exercise.
 - > Recap/What did we learn?
 - . National Weather Service SKYWARN presentation. April 23, 2026.
 - > No members in attendance participated in the SKYWARN webinar; no report.
- Volunteer Coordinator, Alan McRoberts:
 - . Wolf Creek HOA Safety Fair – April 18, 2026.
 - > Recap: Many families with kids stopped by and enjoyed the fire extinguisher demonstration (P.A.S.S.).
- Administrative Chief, David Matics:
 - . See membership and activity report on next page.
 - . FEMA independent study courses are funded and available again.
 - . Reported on upcoming City-sponsored CPR, First Aid and Stop The Bleed opportunities. Classes will be held at the Margarita Recreation Center (MRC) while the Fire Station 84 training room is undergoing renovations.
 - . Collecting DMV release forms, required before driving any TCC / City-owned vehicles.
- Deputy Manager, Craig Turner:
 - . TCC Advisory Board minutes for May 12 - To be reported at the next meeting.
- TCC Manager, Jeffrey Irwin:
 - . State of the City, May 28.
 - > Two TCC attendees to staff booth: Jose Regueiro volunteered, and the invitation will be extended to members not present at the meeting.
- TCC Program Manager, Mikel Alford:
 - . Updates.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

- Rod Run report: one ankle injury treated by first aid cart personnel.
 - › Approximately 160 -170 public contacts during the Rod Run weekend.

ADJOURNMENT

- Adjourned at 8:10 pm.
- Next Business Meeting will be June 2 at 7:00 pm.

Current Months (November-December)	Apr 2026	Apr 2025
Service Hours	607	803
Incident Activation Hours (Note 1)	0	0
Public Events (Note 2)	3	2
Public Contacts	438	194
Year to Date	2026	2025
Service Hours	2,457	2,413
Incident Activation Hours	0	0
Public Events	10	4
Public Contacts	1,042	227
Active Membership	2025	
Members/Applicant	6	
EmComm Only	3	
Active (DSW)	33	
Inactive (DSW)	3	
Applicant	0	
LOA	0	
Total	45	

Note 1: No Activations this month

Note 2: Wolf Creek Fair (120), Adult CERT Class (18), Neighborhood Watch/Temecula Community Services Expo (300)

Recruitment

QST, QST, QST Temecula Needs Radio Operators
Stay Connected When It Matters—Join TCC ACS/RACES

When disasters disrupt power, cell networks, and internet service, radio remains one of the most reliable ways to communicate—and trained amateur radio operators become essential.

Temecula Citizen Corps (TCC) is actively recruiting licensed ham operators—and those interested in getting licensed—to support our growing Emergency Communications (EmComm) program. Whether you’re experienced or just starting out, there’s a role for you.

Participation is flexible. You do not need to become a full Disaster Service Worker, and individual membership in RACES or ARES is not required. There are no dues or membership fees—just a commitment to regular on-air participation and occasional EmComm drills. If your interest is radio operations, we offer a pathway to contribute where it matters most.

A critical need—especially during wide-area incidents—is for at-home operators. From your home station, you can monitor National Calling Frequencies and regional channels, listening for assistance requests, damage reports, and emerging issues. Relaying that information to TCC operators provides real-time situational awareness when traditional systems are overwhelmed.

TCC supports a robust, expanding radio network across Temecula, including Winlink RMS stations, voice repeaters, and deployable field assets. We host a weekly Winlink Net with hands-on training exercises and participate in a local RACES/ARES resource net.

Train — Connect — Serve

Join a team where your voice makes a difference when it matters most.

Temecula Citizen Corps Calendar					Public Training @ Margarita Recreation Center Pre-register on website (https://rb.gv/9j3p6s)	
Month	3rd Tuesday Training	CERT Classes	Additional Training/Activities	Public Events	First Aid 8:30am-12:00pm	CPR/AED 6pm-10pm
June	Firefighter Rehab Deployment Drill (Loc TBA)				6/20/26	6/9/26 6/18/26
July	Full Scale Disaster Deployment w/EOC & EmComm (Loc TBA)			July 4th Parade & Extravangza 7/4/26	7/11/26	7/14/26 7/23/26
August	Damage Assessment	National CERT Conference - Irvine 8/27/26 – 8/29/26		National Night Out 8/4/26 Promenade Mall	8/22/26	8/13/26 8/20/26
September	Field Search Techniques			9/11 Remembrance 9/11/26 Duck Pond Health & Preparedness Expo 9/5/26 Promenade Mall	9/26/26	9/15/26 9/22/26
October	Flood Watch Response	Teen CERT 10/9/26 – 10/11/26 CRC	City Facilities Shake Out Drills* TBD	Rose Haven Garden Anniversary 10/17/26	---	10/5/26
November	No Training	Adult CERT 11/6/26 – 11/8/26 MRC			11/24/26	11/10/26
December	No Training		TCC Awards Banquet* TBD	Santa's Electric Parade 12/4/26	---	---

* TCC Members only

Temecula Citizen Corps Management and Staff

TCC Program Manager – Mikel Alford (Temecula Emergency Manager) mikel.alford@temeculaca.gov
TCC Manager – Jeff Irwin jlirwin.tcc@gmail.com
TCC Deputy Manager – Craig Turner cjt.tcc@gmail.com
Administrative Chief – David Matics davidmatics@gmail.com
Logistics Chief – Yeshe Phang yphang@gmail.com
Assistant Logistics Chief – Angela Little awlittle@msn.com
Chief Radio Supervisor – Mark Utley utley.mark@gmail.com
Assistant Chief Radio Supervisor – position vacant
Training Chief – David Bever david.51.bever@gmail.com
CERT Course Supervisor – Andrea Godoy agodoygm03@gmail.com
Volunteer Coordinator – Alan McRoberts alanmcroberts@verizon.net
Social Outreach Coordinator – Angela Johnson angelarobin1990@gmail.com
Neighborhood Watch Supervisor – Bruce Brunn bbrunn@riversidesheriff.org

Want more information?

Visit us online at Temeculaca.gov/CitizenCorps,
use the QR code, or
contact us at TemeculaCitizenCorps@gmail.com



Fall 2026 Teen CERT Class



Community Emergency Response Team

Basic Course - TEEN

October 9-11, 2026
Friday: 5:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.; Saturday: 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; Sunday: 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
*All Days Must Be Attended for Certificate
CERT Training is a commitment of 22 hours. There is a \$25 fee for the cost of services provided during the course.
For more information, please contact Mikel Alford at mikel.alford@temeculaca.gov

For more information on CERT,
SCAN the QR Code





To Register scan the QR Code

Activity Number:
8355.201

Where:
Community Recreation Center
30875 Rancho Vista Road



Upcoming CERT
Classes

Teen CERT Class
Oct 9-11, 2026
Activity # 8355.201

Adult CERT Class
November 6-8, 2026
Activity # 8255.201

Fall 2026 Adult CERT Class



Community Emergency Response Team

Basic Course - Adult

November 6-8, 2026
Friday: 5:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.; Saturday: 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; Sunday: 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
*All Days Must Be Attended for Certificate
CERT Training is a commitment of 22 hours. There is a \$25 fee for the cost of services provided during the course.
For more information, please contact Mikel Alford at mikel.alford@temeculaca.gov

For more information on CERT,
SCAN the QR Code





To Register scan the QR Code

Activity Number:
8255.201

Where:
Margarita Recreation Center
29119 Margarita Road, Temecula



or

Scan the QR and select
“Special Interest” to
register now.



Share a copy of Temecula Ready with a Neighbor
Scan the QR to download the current or past issues,
and register to automatically receive future issues of
Temecula Ready, the Temecula Citizen Corps Newsletter.



Stay Connected

