

# CERT NEWSLETTER

## COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM

2025 Quarterly Newsletter

January-April

### What's New in City CERT...

Welcome to the City of Miami  
Beach CERT newsletter!

Here you will find:

- [Your Involvement?](#)
- [CERT Volunteer of the Quarter](#)
- [Merit](#)
- [Important Resources](#)
- [Your Leadership Team](#)
- [Event Calendar](#)
- [Active CERT Volunteers](#)
- [New CERT Members](#)
- [CERT in Action](#)



Advanced CERT Training Segment on Choking

Our CERT Newsletter will be published three times per year: in January, May, and September. Please peruse the sections and let us know if there is any content you would like to see added. Please check our website often for new content. We will add new information when it becomes available and necessary for CERT activity.

## how far do you want to be involved?

There are now three (3) levels of CERT Volunteer involvement in the City of Miami Beach. You were contacted by CERT leadership unless you did not respond to them or have not updated your contact information with us. They were asking for any updated contact information and how involved did you want to be with the City. After requests from the State's CERT Program Management and the City, the Division has created three levels of involvement.



### Level 1

Your plan is to assist yourself and your family as well as your nearby neighbors to prepare for any disaster.



### Level 2

In addition to Level 1, you choose to assist/represent the City, when requested, during disasters and "Blue Sky" events. At this level, YOU MUST contact Irene Valines at [cert@miamibeachfl.gov](mailto:cert@miamibeachfl.gov) or 786.441.7422 to set up a BACKGROUND LEVEL 2 check with the City. This must be done prior to assisting with disasters and will also apply to deployment in the County.



### Level 3

In addition to Level 1 and 2, you would like to be part of the Leadership group. You would be assigned Team Lead to your neighborhood as well as nearby neighborhoods to direct during disasters. During "Blue Sky" events, you would also be assigned as Team Lead.

---

Send an email to [CERT@miamibeachfl.gov](mailto:CERT@miamibeachfl.gov) and let us know  
**WHERE YOU WANT TO BE!**

---



## CERT Volunteer of the Quarter

The moment you meet 16-year-old **Sofia Garcia** you understand that she is not your stereotypical teenager. Sofia lives with purpose, and it is obvious. That does not mean that she is not having fun or that she does not giggle occasionally (maybe because she probably knows better than most adults), as I learned during our conversation.

Born in Miami and currently residing in Miami Beach, Sofia is a high school junior enrolled in a STEM-focused program that integrates engineering, environmental science, and biomedical science. She's part of the biomedical track and, while she's not entirely sure where it will lead her, she's considering a future in the medical field—perhaps even medical school. When we spoke, she was preparing for a homework project and admitted her education keeps her very busy.

But academics aren't the only thing filling Sofia's schedule. She's also an active volunteer, often participating in environmental initiatives like beach cleanups and tree planting. "I feel the urge to get involved and help the community," she said. "I like to engage with people of different backgrounds and life experiences. That life experience feeds life into my life." (Wow, Sofia—that was quite profound!)

At school, Sofia is part of BeHip, a club focused on raising awareness among teens about critical issues like mental health and drug addiction. The club provides a safe space for teens to share, learn, and find resources to get the help they need.

Early in our conversation Sofia mentioned that she liked to stay physically active. Her main hobby right now is weight training, and she is passionate about the program she has designed for herself. "I don't really have access to a gym, but I have equipment at home, and this is very important to me," she explained.

I first met Sofia at a CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) volunteer event, where her energy and enthusiasm were unmatched. In no time, she had helped set up our tent, organized the space, and could have easily run it all single-handedly. Thankfully, she shared the workload and her contagious enthusiasm.

Here's what Sofia had to say about her CERT experience:

**Q. Sofia, how did you first learn about CERT, and what inspired you to join?**

I was first introduced to CERT through the Miami Beach Fire Cadet, where cadets were encouraged to receive CERT training. The training was a way to acquire skills and knowledge to help protect myself, my family, and my community in the event of an emergency or disaster situation.

**Q. CERT is designed to be inclusive of all age groups. Did you find the basic training relevant and engaging for your age group?**

My training with CERT was very relevant and engaging and the hands-on exercises were very beneficial. The simulations were the most fun and engaging aspects and made the skills more memorable for me. During our final evaluation where we did a disaster simulation, we had to apply all the information we learned and work as a team.

**Q. Did the CERT training build on what you've learned in school, have an academic impact, or open any future possibilities you hadn't considered before?**

Thanks to the Miami Beach Fire Cadet Program, I had been able to build my background and education in emergency response and fire safety, but CERT helped solidify that knowledge. It has enabled me to engage in opportunities where I can apply these skills and help educate and prepare my community in emergency response.

**Q. Beyond the basic training, have you participated in any CERT exercises or taken advanced training courses?**

Just recently I attended an advanced training course on Hands-on CPR, AED, Choking Rescue, Recovery Position and Pulse Point. I personally attended them as a refresher, and I'm so glad I did and was ready to put them to work recently when my mother took a hard hit on the head and became unresponsive and lost consciousness. Thankfully she regained consciousness, but I was comforted by the fact that I knew how to respond and was prepared to perform CPR if necessary.

**Q. I know you're an active volunteer. Do you have a favorite event or activity you enjoy participating in through CERT?**

It's hard to choose a specific event, but out of all of them I think attending the National Homeland Security Conference and the Turtle Fest were my favorites. The Turtle Fest was one of the first events I had participated in with CERT, not only was it a fun and welcoming experience but I also got to immerse myself in the community. The Homeland security conference was particularly a thrilling experience, in which I got to see familiar faces, welcome people, and work as a team.

**Q. Have you shared your experiences with friends, and what do you think is the best way to encourage more young people to get involved with CERT?**

After every event I share my experience with my friends. I think one way to appeal to young people is by offering training and resources to help them develop new skills and abilities. I think one way CERT can do this is by establishing a social media presence which will increase exposure to and involvement of youth in CERT.

Submitted by,  
Rosie Betancourt

### *Quote*

At the end, it's not about what you have or even what you have accomplished. It's about who you've lifted up, who you've made better. It's about what you've given back."

— Denzel Washington

### Merit

MERIT

If you are missing any Merits, please send me an email listing what is missing. Make sure you have deleted the Merit that is yellow and upload the new one which is what.

### Important Resources

Additional resources are listed on your [CERT website](#).

## Your Leadership Team

Your CERT Team Leads are organized as follows:

### 33139



Ron Andruff



Ombretta Argo



Amani Ayers



Charlie Rabins



Maryanne  
Patlak



Mark Wohl

### 33140



Chaya Dachoh



Brian Gillis



Jeff Gordon

### 33141



Glenn  
Costales



Joann Kersey



Alan Stang

### Condominiums



Felix Montes  
(Green  
Diamond)

### Hotels



Lucas Guzman  
(Confidante)

### Businesses



Wanda Currea  
(Starwood  
Properties)

### Newsletter Reporter

Rosa Betancour



If you are interested in forming a team in your neighborhood, building or business, please email [CERT@miamibeachfl.gov](mailto:CERT@miamibeachfl.gov) with the subject line "Forming CERT Team" and team leadership will respond to you based on your location or type of team.

## Event Calendar

Listed on this page are the trainings and events which will occur 2025. You will find **additional opportunities** to attend on the CERT page of the [City's website](#). To volunteer for any of the events or to register for the Advanced CERT trainings please contact Irene Valines at the Miami Beach Fire Department's Division of Emergency Management. **You will also receive calendar invites. Answer "Accept", "Tentative", or "Decline" so we can know who will be participating.** There are other Advanced trainings coming, so continue checking the CERT online calendar or sign up to the calendar online for updates.

**Calendar invites will be coming out soon.**

### January

---

### February

12 – 14	Basic CERT Training (Tentative)
19	Crowd Control & De-Escalation (Training by Miami Beach PD) **
22	Emergency Evacuation Assistance Program Call-down
25 – 27	Basic CERT Training

---

### March

Feb 28 - March 2	Spring Break First Aid Building
7 – 9	
14 – 16	
21 – 23	
28 – 30	
5 – 6	Disaster Expo Preparedness Tent and Demos at Emergency Response Live! (Miami Beach Convention Center)
19	B2B: Search & Rescue

---

### April

4	Check-In Call
12	Miami Beach Turtlefest Preparedness and Extreme Heat Rehab Tents
12, 13, 19	Basic CERT Training
13	Advanced CERT: TBA (Tentative)
16 – 18	CERT Train-the-Trainer Course (Tentative)
20 – 26	<b>NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK</b>

23 Preparedness Table at Commission Meeting

---

May

**NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH**

10 Advanced CERT: SkyWarn Spotter/Tour of National Weather Service & National Hurricane Center  
11, 17, 18 Basic CERT Training (in Spanish)  
14 Advanced CERT: Active Shooter (Training by Miami Beach PD) \*\*  
21 Preparedness Table at Commission Meeting  
23 – 25 Memorial Day Weekend Air & Sea Show (First Aid Building)

---

**June 1 – November 30  
HURRICANE SEASON**

**June 15 – July 13  
FIFA CLUB CUP**

---

June

1 Advanced CERT: Human Trafficking \*\*  
10, 11, 12 & Basic CERT Training  
17, 18, 19  
15 B2B: Fire Safety & Utilities  
18 Preparedness Table at Commission Meeting  
25 Advanced Training: Handheld Radio Usage

---

July

4 Fire on the Fourth Preparedness and Extreme Heat Rehab Tents  
19 Back to School Bash with Calvary Miami Beach (Tentative)

---

August

1 CERT Check-in Call  
2 Family Back to School Resource Fair provided by Miami Beach Housing & Community Services (Tentative)  
4 – 9 National CERT Conference  
11 – 16 Florida State CERT Conference

16, 17, 23      Basic CERT Training  
30      Advanced Training: Sheltering, provided by American Red Cross

---

September

17      B2B: Disaster Medical  
20, 21, 27      Basic CERT Training (in Spanish)

---

October

3      CERT Check-in Call  
12, 19, 26      Basic CERT Training  
22      Advanced CERT: Hands on CPR, AED, Choking Rescue, Recovery Position, and PulsePoint  
25      Advanced CERT: Moulage (Tentative)

---

November

9      OPERATION BLUE SKIES (CERT Full-Scale Exercise)  
11      Veterans Day Preparedness and Extreme Heat Tents plus Parade  
16      Miami Beach Police Department Block Party (Tentative)  
19      Advanced CERT: Firefighter Rehab

---

December



**\*\* = Training in preparation for deployment to Spring Break and possibly FIFA Club Cup**

We need your help. For each activity, a calendar invite will be emailed to you. For volunteering/attendance, you would select either "Accept", "Tentative" or "Decline". **Please chose one.** You can come into the calendar invite and change your answer before the event/training. When creating the sign-in sheet, **we depend upon the responses. If you accept to participate, please come, and assist.** For some reason, this past quarter, some of the events had volunteers listed to assist and no one showed up.

Also, when you have the first shift, the beginning time listed is the setup time. The last hour listed is breakdown. If you sign up for the late shift, please stay until the site is completely broken down and stored in the CERT trailer/truck.



Active CERT Volunteers this Past Quarter



Joann Kersey

Sofia Garcia

Arianna Nanni

John Adams

Vince Corbett

Victor DiPersia

Alan Stang

Thank you and a job well done!

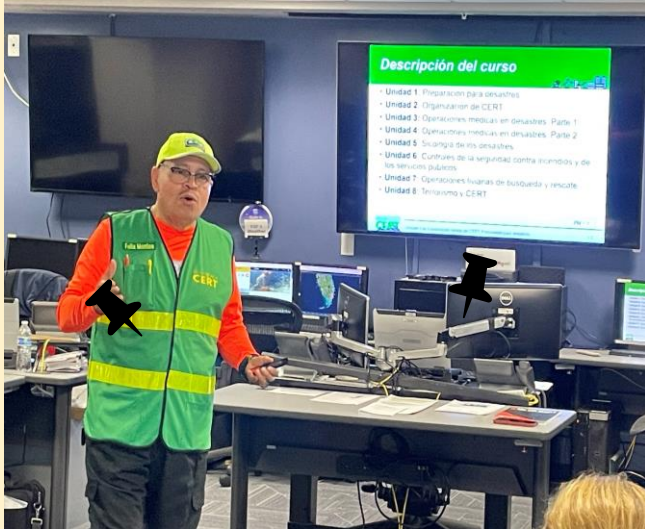
Welcome New CERT Members

Josephine Hodge  
Brian Hamburger  
Giuliana Uathavikul  
Lissi Hernandez  
Roberto Calderon

Febe Perez  
Gabriela Salles Cabrera  
Marisol Dieguez  
Gus Velez  
Joel Cuchillo



# CERT IN ACTION



**CERT Volunteer Felix Montes teaching Basic CERT in Spanish**



**Advanced CERT Training Class Pic**

CPR, AED, Choking, Recovery Position, PulsePoint



**Certificate of Recognition from City Commission to CERT Volunteers**



**November 2024 CERT Class**



Remember to always be a pebble in the water. Spread the good news of Preparedness.

Thank you for helping to make Miami Beach a more resilient City.

**Irene Valines**, CERT Program Manager

*EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT*

2310 Pine Tree Drive, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Miami Beach, FL 33140

Tel: 305.673.7000 ext. 22793 | Cell: 786.441.7422 | DEM: 305.673.7736

[CERT@miamibeachfl.gov](mailto:CERT@miamibeachfl.gov) | [www.miamibeachfl.gov](http://www.miamibeachfl.gov)

*We are committed to providing excellent public service and safety to all who live, work and play in our vibrant, tropical, historic community.*



CERT Program  
Manager