

Emergency response team completes first training course in Weston

Written by Chris Bradbury, Weston CERT Deputy Team Leader
Sunday, 25 March 2012 00:00

Eighteen residents of Weston and surrounding towns, including Weston First Selectman Gayle Weinstein, completed their initial Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training the weekend of March 3 and 4.

The CERT training course prepares residents of the community to help respond to emergencies and disasters. Establishing a CERT program helps bolster the town's volunteer support personnel.

Volunteers were a critical component of the response to the natural disasters that struck Weston in 2011. Response to Tropical Storm Irene and the October blizzard Albert included the efforts of the town's volunteer fire department, EMS, and community coalition.

Training was delivered over two days at the Weston Volunteer Fire Department (WVFD) headquarters. Team members were given presentations on disaster preparedness, CERT organization, terrorism, and biosafety and hazardous materials by Dr. Sheldon Yessenow, a veterinarian from Oronoque Animal Hospital in Stratford.

Weston EMS Chief J.T. Sollazo delivered two courses on medical operations, while Larry Roberts, training officer for the WVFD, delivered a course on fire safety and fire control training. Training Officer Roberts then led the class in a hands-on exercise in using fire extinguishers to suppress a fire.

Cathy Kohut of the Monroe-based organization Resources in Search and Rescue and Christine Clark of the Beardsley Zoo then led a session on light search and rescue.

Dr. Yessenow and New Canaan Animal Control Officer Mary Ann Kleinschmitt concluded the training with a series of topics on animal and pet-related topics. Dr. Yessenow is the Region 1 Animal Response Team Leader of Connecticut's State Animal Response Team (CTSART). CTSART is based on a similar program in North Carolina, NCSART, which was founded after Hurricane Floyd claimed more than three million domestic and farm animals. Many could have been saved by a coordinated emergency response plan.

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The Region 1 CTSART is a volunteer organization under the CERT umbrella whose members focus on animal issues during emergencies. The Weston Office of Emergency Management is the host agency for the Region 1 CTSART program and all deployments and training exercises are approved by either Emergency Management Director Joe Miceli or Deputy Emergency Management Director Matt Brodacki.

All CTSART members are also CERT members, and are trained in disaster readiness, first aid, fire control, search and rescue, and other CERT topics but then take additional training in providing animal management and care in times of emergency.

CERT team volunteers will be incorporated into Weston's incident response plans. Weston CERT residents are Michael Vincelli (team leader), Chris Bradbury (deputy team leader), Christopher Rogalin, Ginger Jespersen, Janet Merriss, and Gayle Weinstein. Ms. Weinstein is the chief elected official in Connecticut to complete the initial CERT training course.

Weston's CERT team will be conducting additional training sessions going forward and is looking for additional volunteers to join the team.

Contact Chris Bradbury at cbradbury3@gmail.com for more information.