

Salt Lake City Community Preparedness Council:

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Coordination Guide



This guide is a basic framework for coordinating Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) in Salt Lake City, Utah. It provides basic organization and terminology that is consistent for all CERTs throughout the city. It lays a framework, or foundation, that can be added upon by individual communities as they rally together to develop an overall community response tailored to the unique needs and resources of each community.



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Glossary

All-Hazards: Describing an incident, natural or manmade, that warrants action to protect life, property, environment, and public health or safety, and to minimize disruptions of government, social, or economic activities.

Assessment: The process of acquiring, collecting, processing, examining, analyzing, evaluating, monitoring, and interpreting the data, information, evidence, objects, measurements, images, sound, etc., whether tangible or intangible, to provide a basis for decision-making.

Assistant: Title for subordinates of principal Command Staff positions. The title indicates a level of technical capability, qualifications, and responsibility subordinate to the primary positions. Assistants may also be assigned to Unit Leaders.

Available Resource: Resource assigned to an incident, checked in, and available for a mission assignment, normally located in a Staging Area.

Branch: The organizational level having functional or geographical responsibility for major aspects of incident operations. A Branch is organizationally situated between the Section Chief and the Division or Group in the Operations Section and between the Section and Units in the Logistics Section. Branches are identified by the use of Roman numerals or by functional area.

Branch Director: The Incident Command System title for individuals responsible for supervision of a Branch.

Cache: A predetermined complement of tools, equipment, and/or supplies stored in a designated location, available for incident use.


CERT: Community Emergency Response Team, a group of volunteer community members within a specified geographical area trained in the principles of CERT by a local fire department or Office of Emergency Management who respond jointly as a team during an emergency.

CERT Area: The geographical area for which a CERT is responsible. CERTs in Salt Lake City will be organized along community council boundaries; however, some community council areas are too large for a single team and will need two or more CERTs, while others will be too small to form a fully-functioning CERT and will, therefore, need to join forces with a neighboring community.

CERT Coordinator: A CERT volunteer responsible for creating a self-sufficient CERT in a community council area through efforts such as planning, educating, recruiting, practicing, and other activities. The CERT Community Council Coordinator reports to the Division Supervisor.

CERT Member: A person who has received formal CERT training.

CERT Program: The Salt Lake City program focused on CERT training and CERT Coordination.



CERT Leader: An alternate term for Incident Commander, the leader of the CERT during emergency operations. It is recommended that the title “Incident Commander” be used for consistency with ICS.

Chain of Command: The orderly line of authority within the ranks of the incident management organization.

Check-In: The process through which resources first report to an incident. All responders, regardless of agency affiliation, must report in to receive an assignment in accordance with the procedures established by the Incident Commander.

Command Staff: The staff who report directly to the Incident Commander, including the Public Information Officer, Safety Officer, Liaison Officer, and other positions as required. They may have an assistant or assistants, as needed.

Common Operating Picture (COP): An overview of an incident by all relevant parties that provides incident information enabling the Incident Commander/Unified Command and any supporting agencies and organizations to make effective, consistent, and timely decisions.

Common Terminology: Common words and phrases used to avoid confusion. Common terminology ensures consistency and allows diverse incident management and support organizations to work together across a wide variety of incident management functions and hazard scenarios. Common terminology avoids the use of agency-specific codes or slang.

Communications: The process of transmission of information through verbal, written, or symbolic means.


Communications/Dispatch Center: Agency or interagency dispatch centers, 9-1-1 call centers, emergency control or command dispatch centers, or any naming convention given to the facility and staff that handles emergency calls from the public and communication with emergency management/response personnel. The center can serve as a primary coordination and support element of the Multiagency Coordination System(s) (MACS) for an incident until other elements of the MACS are formally established.

Community Council: Non-profit community groups that represent neighborhood interests in Salt Lake City. There are 21 community councils in the city.

Community Council Area: The geographical area of a community council.

Community Preparedness Coordinator: A Salt Lake City employee in the Office of Emergency Management assigned to manage the CERT Program and conduct other community emergency preparedness and response efforts.

Credentialing: The authentication and verification of the certification and identity of designated incident managers and emergency responders.



Demobilization: The orderly, safe, and efficient return of an incident resource to its original location and status.

Deputy: A fully qualified individual who, in the absence of a superior, can be delegated the authority to manage a functional operation or to perform a specific task. In some cases, a deputy can act as relief for a superior, and, therefore, must be fully qualified in the position. Deputies generally can be assigned to the Incident Commander, General Staff, and Branch Directors.

Disaster: An incident when lives, health and/or environment are endangered and emergency personnel and normal municipal services are overwhelmed. Disasters are relatively unexpected.

Division: The organizational level having responsibility for operations within a defined geographic area. Divisions are established when the number of resources exceeds the manageable span of control of the Section Chief. Salt Lake City has four designated divisions: Northwest, Northeast, Southwest and Southeast. Each Division is comprised of four to seven Community Council Areas.

Division Supervisor: A CERT volunteer responsible for recruiting and training CERT Coordinators.

Emergency: Any incident, whether natural or manmade, that requires immediate action to protect life or property. Emergencies are typically handled on the most local level until assistance is needed from a higher level of government. The executive on city (mayor), county (mayor), state (governor), and federal (president) levels has authority to declare an emergency.


Emergency Management/Emergency Response Personnel: Includes Federal, State, territorial, tribal, substate regional, and local governments, NGOs, private sector-organizations, critical infrastructure owners and operators, and all other organizations and individuals who assume an emergency management role. Also known as emergency responders.

Emergency Operations Plan (EOP): An ongoing plan for responding to a wide variety of potential hazards.

Emergency Public Information: Information that is disseminated primarily in anticipation of or during an emergency. In addition to providing situational information to the public, emergency public information frequently provides directive actions required to be taken by the general public.

Evacuation: The organized, phased, and supervised withdrawal, dispersal, or removal of civilians from dangerous or potentially dangerous areas and their reception and care in safe areas.

Field Operations Guide (FOG): Durable pocket or desk guides that contain essential information required to perform specific assignments or functions during an incident.



General Staff: A group of incident management personnel organized according to function and reporting to the Incident Commander. The General Staff normally consists of the Operations Section Chief, Planning Section Chief, Logistics Section Chief, and Finance/Administration Section Chief. An Intelligence/Investigations Chief may be established, if required, to meet incident management needs.

Group: An organizational subdivision established to divide the incident management structure into functional areas of operation. Groups are composed of resources assembled to perform a special function not necessarily within a single geographic division.

Hazard: Something that is potentially dangerous or harmful, often the root cause of an unwanted outcome.

Incident: An occurrence, natural or manmade, that requires a response to protect life or property. For example, incidents can include terrorist threats or attacks, civil unrest, war-related disasters, public health and medical emergencies, hazardous materials spills, nuclear accidents, aircraft and other transportation accidents, utilities failures, winter storms, wildland and urban fires, floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, and other occurrences requiring an emergency response.

Incident Action Plan: A plan outlining incident objectives for each operational period. An operational period is typically 12 hours.

Incident Base: The location at which primary Logistics functions for an incident are coordinated and administered. There is only one Base per incident. (Incident name or other designator will be added to the term Base.) The Incident Command Post may be co-located with the Incident Base.

Incident Command: The Incident Command System organizational element responsible for overall management of the incident and consisting of the Incident Commander (either single or unified command structure) and any assigned supporting staff.

Incident Command Post (ICP): The field location where the primary functions are performed. The ICP may be co-located with the Incident Base or other incident facilities.

Incident Command System (ICS): A standardized on-scene emergency management construct specifically designed to provide an integrated organizational structure that reflects the complexity and demands of single or multiple incidents without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries. ICS is the combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure, designed to aid in the management of resources during incidents. ICS is used for all kinds of emergencies and is applicable to small as well as large and complex incidents. ICS is used by various jurisdictions and functional agencies, both public and private, to organize field-level incident management operations.



Incident Command System (ICS) Chain of Command: A hierarchy of organizational levels and their respective position titles represented in the following table:

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL	POSITION TITLE
Incident Command	Incident Commander
Section	Section Chief
Group	Group Supervisor
Unit	Unit Leader
Team	Team Leader

Incident Commander (IC): The individual responsible for all incident activities, including the development of strategies and tactics and the ordering and release of resources. The IC has overall authority and responsibility for conducting incident operations and is responsible for the management of all incident operations at the incident site.

Incident Management: The broad spectrum of activities and organizations providing effective and efficient operations, coordination, and support applied at all levels of government, utilizing governmental and nongovernmental resources to plan for, respond to, and recover from an incident, regardless of cause, size, or complexity.

Job Aid: Checklist or other visual aid intended to ensure that specific steps of completing a task or an assignment are accomplished. Standard Incident Command System forms are available at http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/ics_forms_2010.pdf.

Jurisdiction: A range or sphere of authority. Public agencies have jurisdiction at an incident related to their legal responsibilities and authority. Jurisdictional authority at an incident can be political or geographical (e.g., Federal, State, tribal, local boundary lines) or functional (e.g., law enforcement, public health).


Liaison: A form of communication for establishing and maintaining mutual understanding and cooperation.

Liaison Officer: A member of the Command Staff responsible for coordinating with representatives from cooperating and assisting agencies or organizations.

Logistics: The process and procedure for providing resources and other services to support incident management.

Logistics Section: The Section of the Incident Command System responsible for providing facilities, services, and material support for an incident.

Management By Objectives: A management approach that involves a five-step process for achieving the incident goal. The Management By Objectives approach includes establishing



overarching incident objectives; developing strategies based on overarching incident objectives; developing and issuing assignments, plans, procedures, and protocols; establishing specific, measurable tactics or tasks for various incident-management functional activities and directing efforts to attain them in support of defined strategies; and documenting results to measure performance and facilitate corrective action.

Manager: Individual within an organizational unit of the Incident Command System who is assigned specific managerial responsibilities (e.g., Staging Area Manager or Camp Manager).

Mobilization: The process and procedures used by all organizations—Federal, State, tribal, and local—for activating, assembling, and transporting all resources that have been requested to respond to or support an incident.

Multi-Jurisdictional Incident: An incident requiring action from multiple agencies that each have jurisdiction to manage certain aspects of an incident. In the Incident Command System, these incidents will be managed under Unified Command.

National Incident Management System (NIMS): A set of principles that provides a systematic, proactive approach guiding government agencies at all levels, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to work seamlessly to prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of incidents, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity, in order to reduce the loss of life or property or harm to the environment.


Nongovernmental Organization (NGO): An entity with an association that is based on interests of its members, individuals, or institutions. NGOs are not created by a government but may work cooperatively with government. Such organizations serve a public purpose, not a private benefit. Examples of NGOs include faith-based charity organizations and the American Red Cross. NGOs provide relief services to sustain life, reduce physical and emotional distress, and promote the recovery of disaster victims. Often these groups provide specialized services that help individuals with disabilities. NGOs and voluntary organizations play a major role in assisting emergency managers before, during, and after an emergency.

Officer: The Incident Command System title for a person responsible for one of the Command Staff positions of Safety, Liaison, and Public Information.

Operational Period: The time scheduled for executing a given set of operation actions, as specified in the Incident Action Plan. Operational periods can be of various lengths, although usually they last 12 to 24 hours.

Operations Section: The Section of the Incident Command System (ICS) responsible for all tactical incident operations and implementation of the Incident Action Plan. In ICS, the Operations Section normally includes subordinate Branches, Divisions, and/or Groups.

Personal Responsibility: The obligation to be accountable for one's own actions.



Personnel Accountability: The ability to account for the location and welfare of incident personnel. To that end, supervisors ensure that Incident Command System principles and processes are functional and that personnel are working within established incident management guidelines.

Personnel Accountability Officer: An individual responsible for accounting for the location and welfare of incident personnel. This officer would be part of the Human Resources Unit of the Logistics Section, which is part of the General Staff. The Personnel Accountability Officer coordinates with the Safety Officer (part of the Command Staff) to ensure the safety of responders.

Plain Language: Communication that can be understood by the intended audience and meets the purpose of the communicator. For the purpose of the National Incident Management System, plain language is designed to eliminate or limit the use of codes and acronyms, as appropriate, during incident response involving more than a single agency.

Planning Meeting: A meeting held as needed before and throughout the duration of an incident to select specific strategies and tactics for incident control operations and for service and support planning. For larger incidents, the Planning Meeting is a major element in the development of the Incident Action Plan.

Planning Section: The Section of the Incident Command System responsible for the collection, evaluation, and dissemination of operational information related to the incident, and for the preparation and documentation of the Incident Action Plan. This Section also maintains information on the current and forecasted situation and on the status of resources assigned to the incident.

Protocol: A set of established guidelines for actions (which may be designated by individuals, teams, functions, or capabilities) under various specified conditions.

Resource Management: A system for identifying available resources at all jurisdictional levels to enable timely, efficient, and unimpeded access to resources needed to prepare for, respond to, or recover from an incident. Resource management under the National Incident Management System includes mutual aid agreements and assistance agreements; the use of special Federal, State, tribal, and local teams; and resource mobilization protocols.

Safety Officer: A member of the Command Staff responsible for monitoring incident operations and advising the Incident Commander on all matters relating to operational safety, including the health and safety of emergency responder personnel.

Salt Lake City Community Preparedness Council: A community organization that connects volunteers with various community emergency preparedness programs and opportunities in Salt Lake City.



Salt Lake City Coordination Center (SLCCC): The physical location at which the coordination of information and resources to support incident management (on-scene operations) activities within Salt Lake City normally takes place.

Salt Lake City Office of Emergency Management: The Salt Lake City division that manages the City's emergency preparedness and response efforts.

Section: The Incident Command System organizational level having responsibility for a major functional area of incident management (e.g., Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance/Administration, and Intelligence/Investigations, if established). The Section is organizationally situated between the Incident Command and the Branch.

Section Chief: The Incident Command System title for individuals responsible for management of functional Sections: Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance/Administration, and Intelligence/Investigations (if established as a separate Section).

Single Resource: An individual, a piece of equipment and its personnel complement, or a crew/team of individuals with an identified work supervisor that can be used on an incident.

Situation Report: Confirmed or verified information regarding the specific details relating to an incident.

Span of Control: The number of resources for which a supervisor is responsible, usually expressed as the ratio of supervisors to individuals. Under the National Incident Management System, an appropriate span of control is between 1:3 and 1:7, with optimal being 1:5, or between 1:8 and 1:10 for many large-scale law enforcement operations.

Special Needs Population: A population whose members may have additional needs before, during, and after an incident in functional areas, including but not limited to: maintaining independence, communication, transportation, supervision, and medical care. Individuals in need of additional response assistance may include those who have disabilities, who live in institutionalized settings, who are elderly, who are children, who are from diverse cultures, who have limited English proficiency or are non-English-speaking, or who are transportation disadvantaged.

Staging Area: Temporary location for available resources. A Staging Area can be any location in which personnel, supplies, and equipment can be temporarily housed or parked while awaiting operational assignment.

Status Report: Information specifically related to the status of resources (e.g., the availability or assignment of resources).

Strategy: The general plan or direction selected to accomplish incident objectives.

Strike Team: A set number of resources of the same kind and type that have an established minimum number of personnel, common communications, and a leader.



Supervisor: The Incident Command System title for an individual responsible for a Division or Group.

Tactics: The deployment and directing of resources on an incident to accomplish the objectives designated by strategy.

Task Force: Any combination of resources assembled to support a specific mission or operational need. All resource elements within a Task Force must have common communications and a designated leader.

Teams: Three to seven responders working together on a specific task within a Unit. (e.g., within the Search & Rescue Unit – Search & Rescue Team A, Search & Rescue Team B, etc.).

Team Leader: The person in charge of a team during an incident, such as Search & Rescue Team A Leader.

Technical Specialist: Person with special skills that can be used anywhere within the Incident Command System organization. No minimum qualifications are prescribed, as technical specialists normally perform the same duties during an incident that they perform in their everyday jobs, and they are typically certified in their fields or professions.

Threat: Natural or manmade occurrence, individual, entity, or action that has or indicates the potential to harm life, information, operations, the environment, and/or property.

Type: An Incident Command System resource classification that refers to capability. Type 1 is generally considered to be more capable than Types 2, 3, or 4, respectively, because of size, power, capacity, or (in the case of Incident Management Teams) experience and qualifications.

Unified Command (UC): An Incident Command System application used when more than one agency has incident jurisdiction or when incidents cross political jurisdictions. Agencies work together through the designated members of the UC, often the senior persons from agencies and/or disciplines participating in the UC, to establish a common set of objectives and strategies and a single Incident Action Plan.

Unit: The organizational element with functional responsibility for a specific incident planning, logistics, or finance/administration activity.

Unit Leader: The individual in charge of managing Units within an Incident Command System (ICS) functional Section. The Unit can be staffed by a number of support personnel providing a wide range of services. Some of the support positions are pre-established within ICS (e.g., Base/Camp Manager), but many others will be assigned as technical specialists.

Unity of Command: An Incident Command System principle stating that each individual involved in incident operations will be assigned to only one supervisor.



Salt Lake City Community Preparedness Council

The Salt Lake City Community Preparedness Council is a community organization that connects volunteers with various volunteer programs and opportunities in Salt Lake City. The CERT Program is one of the core volunteer programs supported by the Community Preparedness Council. In Salt Lake City, CERTs are coordinated through the Community Preparedness Council in partnership with the city's Office of Emergency Management. The volunteer work provided through CERTs is vital to an effective emergency response in a large-scale disaster. It has proven valuable in isolated emergency situations and in non-emergency events where a coordinated volunteer effort was needed.

CERT Coordination

The community council areas are the basic level on which CERTs will be organized. Community councils are non-profit community groups that represent neighborhood interests in a portion of the city. There are currently 21 community councils in Salt Lake City. **In general, there will be one CERT within a given community council's geographical area.** However, some community council areas are too large for a single team and will need two or more CERTs while others will be too small to form a fully-functioning CERT and will therefore need to join forces with a neighboring community. Note that while community council areas are the basic level on which CERTs will be organized, CERT coordination is not required to occur within the actual community council organization. Ideally, however, the community council organization will be actively involved in CERT coordination to some degree.

It is recommended that a CERT have a minimum of 20 CERT members with the assumption that, in an emergency, as many as half of the CERT members may not participate for various reasons. The boundaries for each CERT define the CERT Area and are recorded on the Salt Lake City CERT Map maintained by the Office of Emergency Management.

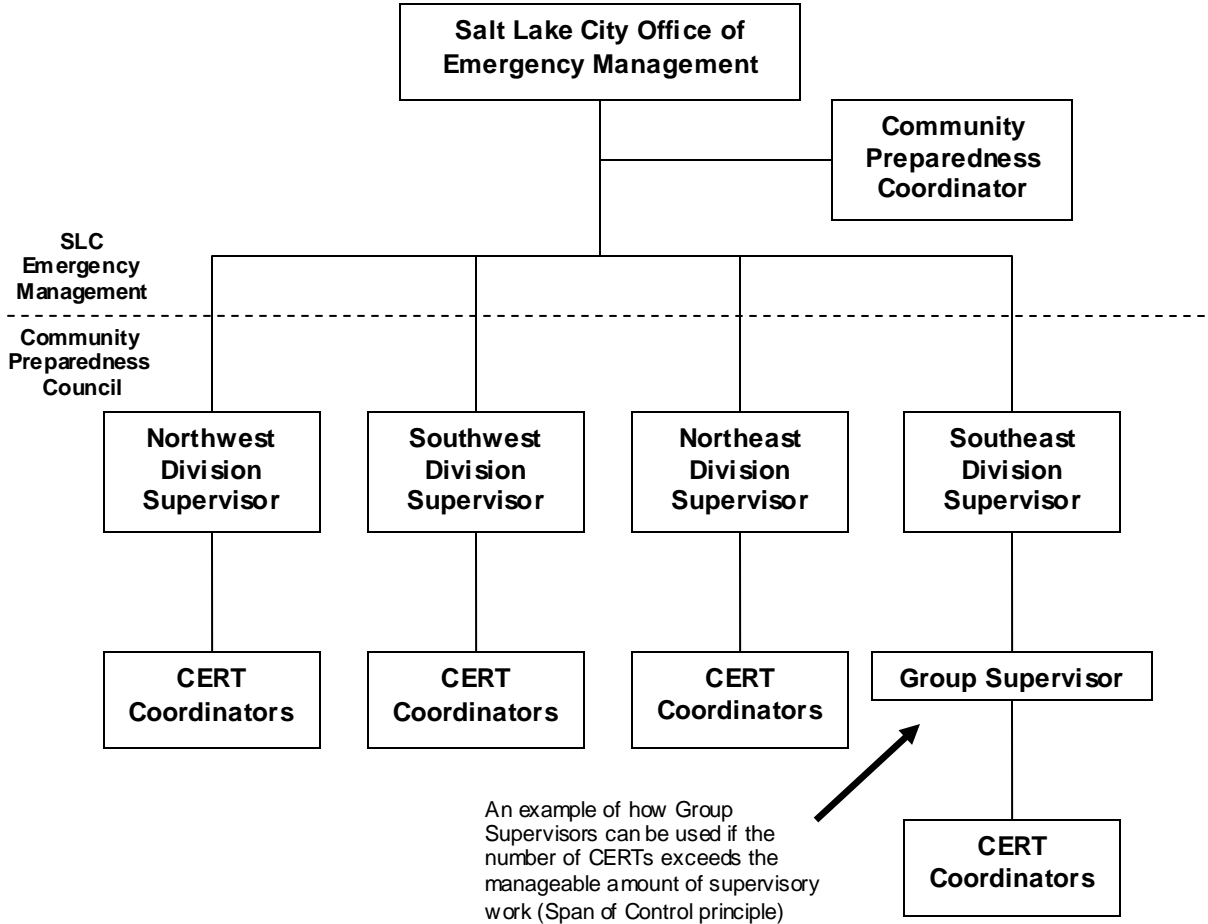
Salt Lake City is divided into four Divisions—Northwest, Northeast, Southwest and Southeast. Each Division is led by a **Division Supervisor** who is responsible for coordinating CERTs in three to seven community council areas. The Division Supervisor is trained and supported by the city's Community Preparedness Coordinator in the Office of Emergency Management. The span-of-control principle states that each supervisor has three to seven people who report to him or her, the optimal number being 5. If the number of CERTs in a Division exceeds a manageable amount of supervisory work, **Group Supervisors** may be recruited to coordinate subdivision areas and in turn report to the Division Supervisor.

Each CERT has a CERT Coordinator who reports to the Division Supervisor and is responsible for the coordination and development of the CERT in the community council area. The CERT Coordinator is responsible for creating a self-sufficient CERT through efforts such as planning, educating, recruiting, practicing, and other activities. **The CERT Coordinator may be but is not necessarily the Incident Commander when the team is activated.** According to Incident Command System (ICS) principles, the Incident Commander should be the person who is best qualified to fulfill the duties of that position.



In summary, four Division Supervisors are trained and supported by the Office of Emergency Management. In turn, the Division Supervisors train and support CERT Coordinators. Division Supervisors may utilize Group Supervisors if the amount of CERTs in the Division is too large to supervise. The following figure illustrates the lines of communication and coordination for CERTs in Salt Lake City.


FIGURE 1: Lines of Communication Used to Coordinate CERTs (Non-emergency)



In a disaster, these lines of communication and coordination will be used. CERTs will function within their own CERT Areas unless requested by other CERTs or the Division Supervisors to assist in other areas. Through their assigned Divisions, CERTs can communicate their status, needs, and resources to neighboring CERTs and to the **Salt Lake City Coordination Center**—the heart of the city’s emergency response operations.

Establishing a CERT

CERT-trained individuals within each CERT Area make up the members of the CERT. Following are some basic guidelines for establishing a CERT:

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1. The **Salt Lake City Community Preparedness Coordinator**, in partnership with the **Salt Lake City Community Preparedness Council**, recruits and trains volunteer **Division Supervisors**, who in turn recruit and train **CERT Coordinators**. The CERT Coordinators are responsible for developing and coordinating a self-sufficient CERT through efforts such as planning, educating, recruiting, practicing, and other activities.
 2. The **CERT Coordinator** identifies CERT-trained residents (CERT members) within the CERT Areas and collects contact information for each, such as phone numbers and home and e-mail addresses. The Coordinator should also identify all other current emergency response coordination efforts in the CERT Area. Ideally, community emergency response plans in businesses, schools, churches and other organizations will be integrated with the CERT response to provide for the most effective overall community response.
 3. The **CERT Coordinator** holds a kick-off meeting with the identified CERT members to disseminate the *CERT Coordination Guide*, conduct initial training on the basic CERT coordination framework, and give CERT members an opportunity to ask questions.
 4. The **CERT Coordinator** holds regular meetings with the CERT. These meetings can be to conduct training, make specific team plans such as pre-designating leadership roles to team members, conduct a drill/exercise, etc. As a general guideline, CERT meetings should occur at least twice per year and more frequently as needed. However, Coordinators should be sensitive to what might constitute “too many” meetings. The recommended number of meetings for a CERT is two to four per year.



CERT Operations

CERT Activation

There are two likely scenarios that would involve CERTs in Salt Lake City: activation by the city and self-activation. CERT activation by the city would be most likely as city resources, coordinated with other municipalities, would be capable of managing most incidents. In such circumstances, CERTs should not mobilize until requested by the City's Incident Command. CERT self-activation would occur in a mass disaster when city personnel and resources are less likely to reach affected areas in a timely manner.

Fundamental CERT Principles

These principles guide team operations and should be followed at all levels:

1. **Rescuer safety is the number one concern.** To ensure rescuer safety, continually size up the situation and its hazards.
2. **Unity of Command:** Each CERT Member has only one person from whom he or she takes direction. In other words, each CERT Member has only one supervisor.
3. **Span of Control:** Each supervisor has 3-7 people who report to him or her, the optimal number being 5.
4. **Do the greatest good for the greatest number of people according to the team's capability and training.**

Basic Objectives of CERT Operations

The basic objectives of the CERT are to:

1. Assess the situation (What is the problem?)
2. Determine an overall team strategy (What can we do, and how will we do it?)
3. Deploy groups and resources (Who is going to do what?)
4. Document actions and results (What are we doing and what have we accomplished?)
5. Continually assess the situation and respond according to the needs of the moment (Now, what is the problem and should the strategy change?)



CERT Organization During an Incident

CERTs are organized using the Incident Command System (ICS) as outlined in the National Incident Management System (NIMS). The Incident Command System defines common terminology and a chain of command structure that allows all responders in an emergency to quickly understand the organization of the emergency response structure. For example, a CERT member should be able to join the efforts of any CERT in Salt Lake City and already have an understanding of the basic organizational structure of that team.

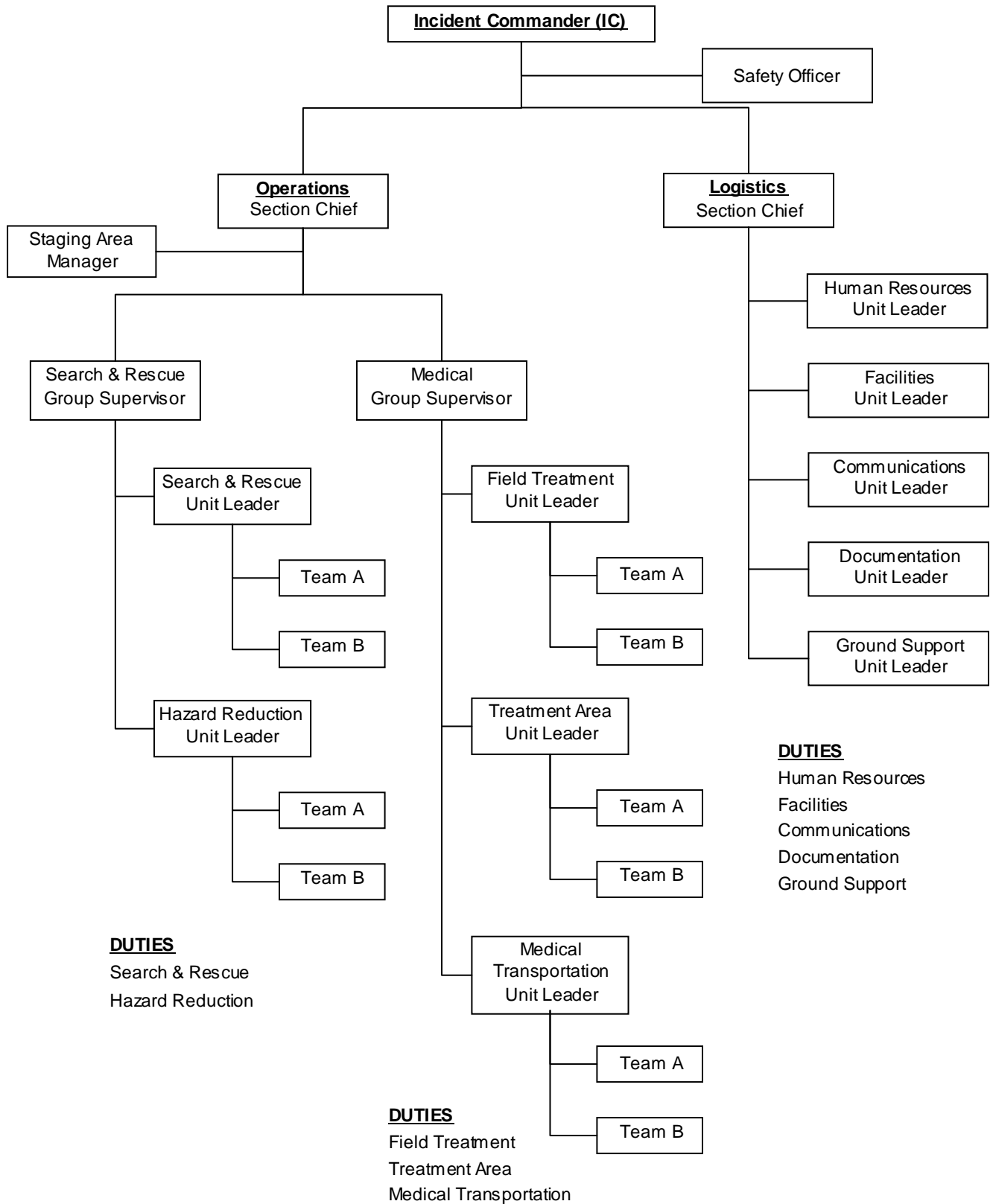
The **Incident Command System (ICS) Chain of Command** follows an orderly line of authority for communicating information and requests within the response organization. The organizational levels and their respective position titles that will most commonly be used by Salt Lake City CERTs are represented in the following table:

CERT ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL	POSITION TITLE
Incident Command	Incident Commander
Section	Section Chief
Group	Group Supervisor
Unit	Unit Leader
Team	Team Leader

The four primary ICS functions are: Operations, Logistics, Finance/Administration, and Planning. As needed, each of these four functions may become a section within the team structure. The following figure illustrates a Basic CERT Structure which serves as a template for CERT organization. This structure may be expanded or contracted depending on the magnitude of the situation. Operations and Logistics are the two sections most likely to be activated in a standard CERT response with the Finance/Administration and Planning functions being handled by the CERT Incident Commander. The Finance/Administration and Planning functions of the system may be expanded into staffed sections as needed. (Remember to follow the ICS principles of Unity of Command and Span of Control when expanding or contracting the CERT organization during an incident.)



FIGURE 4: Basic CERT Structure During an Incident





Leadership

CERT Incident Commander

The Incident Commander is responsible for steering the general activities of the overall CERT by identifying the changing needs of the emergency situation and assessing the ways in which the team as-a-whole is responding to those needs with the resources available. The Incident Commander is chosen out of the group of CERT members to arrive first at the command post by that same group. However, since the Incident Commander should be the person best qualified to fulfill the duties of that position, the Incident Commander role may pass from one individual to another when a more qualified individual arrives. If such a transfer of leadership occurs, it is vital that the outgoing Incident Commander thoroughly review all pertinent information with the incoming Incident Commander in a Transfer of Command Briefing.

Safety Officer

The Safety Officer is the member of the Command Staff responsible for monitoring incident operations and advising the Incident Commander on all matters relating to operational safety, including the health and safety of emergency responders. Examples of duties include being aware of changing conditions in the weather and work environment that would pose significant risk to response personnel, instituting work shifts, monitoring psycho-emotional well-being of the team, and ensuring personnel are wearing proper safety equipment and exercising safe work practices. In NIMS ICS, the Safety Officer has authority to shut down operational activities in the event of safety concerns.

Section Chiefs

The Incident Commander assigns a Section Chief to each Section of the General Staff. The two General Staff Sections most commonly activated within the basic CERT command structure are the Operations Section and the Logistics Section. As needed, the Incident Commander may choose to create Sections for Finance/Administration and Planning, the remaining two components of the basic ICS General Staff.

Group Supervisors

The Section Chief assigns a Group Supervisor to each Group formed. While the types of Groups that are created within a CERT are flexible, the Operations Section commonly has two basic Groups: a Search & Rescue Group and a Medical Group. The Group Supervisor sees that individual Group duties are accomplished through Units that are assigned specific functions.

Unit Leaders

The Group Supervisor assigns a Unit for each specific function for which the Group is responsible and assigns a Unit Leader for each Unit formed. For example, the Medical Group in the Operations Section is responsible for field treatment, the treatment area, and medical transportation. A unit is formed for each of these specific functions.



Team Leaders

The Unit Leader assigns teams of three to seven people to divide up the work associated with the special task of that Unit. A Team Leader is assigned for each team.

Operations & Logistics Sections Duties/Responsibilities

Following are descriptions of the responsibilities pre-assigned to the Operations and Logistics Sections in the basic CERT organization.

Operations Section

The Operations Section is responsible for the Search & Rescue Group, the Medical Group, and all other field response activities undertaken by the CERT. The Operations Section is responsible for establishing staging areas as they are needed in the field.

In addition to the information provided herein, the “CERT All-Weather Field Operations Guide” by JL Darling Corporation (www.RiteintheRain.com) is a quick reference guide that can be used for supplemental information on CERT operations and techniques.

Search & Rescue Group


The **Search & Rescue Group** has two primary responsibilities: (1) Search & Rescue and (2) Hazard Reduction. Each responsibility is assigned to a Unit:

- 1) The **Search & Rescue Unit** assigns Teams to accomplish the following:
 - a) Travel door-to-door to rapidly assess the status of the occupants of every structure in the area, performing triage and simple treatment.
 - b) Identify (“tag”) victims as Immediate, Delayed, or Dead and perform simple treatment for the three killers—Airway, Bleeding, Shock (ABS).
 - c) Record the status of each structure and communicate which structures have people labeled “Immediate” to the Medical Section for field treatment.
 - d) Perform light rescue activities when the rescuer safety can be assured.
- 2) The **Hazard Reduction Unit** assigns Teams to accomplish the following:
 - a) Perform fire suppression on small fires that are manageable with the equipment available.
 - b) Identify other hazards (such as broken glass, water main breaks, downed power lines and gas leaks) and devise and carry out safe methods of reducing danger to the community.

Medical Group

The Medical Group has three primary responsibilities: (1) Field Treatment, (2) the Treatment Area, and (3) Medical Transportation. Each responsibility is assigned to a Unit:


- 1) The **Field Treatment Unit** assigns Teams to accomplish the following:

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- a) Follow the Search & Rescue Group by going to locations with people who have been labeled by Search & Rescue as “Immediate” and provide CERT-level medical treatment to those victims.
 - b) Determine the amount of professional medical help available (hospitals, clinics, community members with professional training) and what victims will receive it.
 - c) Treat the “Immediates” in the structure in which they were found unless the team determines it would be unsafe to do so and/or would be more beneficial to create a medical treatment area.
 - d) If possible, leave at least one person to care for each “Immediate” (this can be a capable family member or a team member).
 - e) Determine when and how the “Delayededs” will receive medical attention.
- 2) The **Treatment Area Unit** assigns Teams to accomplish the following:
 - a) If the CERT determines it will be safer or more beneficial to create a treatment area than to treat victims in their homes, establish a Treatment Area.
 - b) Work with the Search & Rescue Group to safely transport victims to the Treatment Area.
 - c) Conduct bed-to-bed treatment of the “Immediates.”
 - d) Determine when and how the “Delayededs” will receive medical attention.
 - 3) The **Medical Transportation Unit** assigns Teams to accomplish the following:
 - a) Provide transportation of victims to the Treatment Area and/or other medical facilities.

Logistics Section

The Logistics Section has five primary responsibilities: (1) Human Resources, (2) Facilities, (3) Communications, (4) Documentation, and (5) Ground Support. Each responsibility is assigned to a Unit:

- 1) The **Human Resources Unit** assigns Teams to accomplish the following:
 - a) Conduct the check-in (activation) and initial assignment of CERT-trained volunteers. Assignments will be based on volunteers’ experience and training.
 - b) Track assignments with documentation, having a constant knowledge of how many people are assigned to each section. These duties are typically assumed by the appointment of a Personnel Accountability Officer within the Human Resources Unit.
 - c) Conduct check-out (deactivation) by recording when CERT Members finish their work with the team for the day or shift.
 - d) If needed, institute work shifts. In NIMS ICS, a standard operational period is 12 hours. However, depending on the nature of an incident, physical and psychological conditions may warrant instituting shorter operating shifts for responders. Shifts may be as short as four hours but should not be longer than 12 hours in consideration of responder safety.



The Safety Officer (part of the Command Staff) and Personnel Accountability Officer coordinate closely to maintain a standard of safety for all responders.

- 2) The **Facilities Unit** assigns Teams to accomplish the following:
 - a) Maintain a command post that is clean and free from hazards.
 - b) Identify and label locations for various command functions and basic needs, including places for people to rest, eat, and use the restroom.
 - c) Maintain a minimum-service shelter to meet the basic needs of the “delayed treatment” group of victims awaiting assistance and those residents whose dwelling units are unfit to occupy. Remember that a CERT sheltering area is temporary and is not a Red Cross shelter. Some of the residents at your facility may need to eventually be transferred to a designated Red Cross shelter.
 - d) Manage all available medical supplies, sheltering supplies, tools, food, water, and other resources. Identify shortages and work to fill them.
- 3) The **Communications Unit** assigns Teams to accomplish the following:
 - a) Provide the most effective means of communication possible using mediums including, but not limited to ham radio, two-way radio, telephone, cell phone, internet, written notes, and runners.
 - b) At the direction of the CERT Incident Commander, communicate with the CERT Division Supervisor and other external groups on behalf of the CERT.
 - c) Monitor the media for information useful to the CERT or that may need to be corrected or updated.
- 4) The **Documentation Unit** assigns Teams to accomplish the following:
 - a) Document situation status for the Command Post, including incident locations, access routes, identified hazards, locations of all team functions, and human resource assignments.
 - b) Provide CERT forms for the logging and tracking of CERT functions. Standard Incident Command System forms are available at:
http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nims/ics_forms_2010.pdf.
- 5) The **Ground Support Unit** assigns Teams to accomplish the following:
 - a) Provide transportation of team members, equipment, and supplies in support of CERT operations.



Basic CERT Principles

This summary includes many of the principles and techniques taught in CERT training. It is intended to be used as a resource. It does not substitute for formal CERT training, refreshers, drills or exercises.

Mobilizing with the CERT

1. Respond to the immediate needs of your household.
2. Get your gear.
3. Report to your CERT's designated meeting location, making note on the way of any hazards or conditions of which the CERT should be aware e.g., downed power lines, broken gas mains, fires, severely damaged structures).
4. Upon arrival of a sufficient number of CERT members, designate the Command Post location and appoint an Incident Commander. (Refer to basic ICS principles of establishing Incident Command).
5. The Incident Commander will assign you to a position.

Fire Suppression

CERT members can suppress fires not larger than a garbage can. Use the buddy system; establish two ways to exit; and use protective gear. PASS the fire extinguisher at the fire base: **P**oint, **A**im, **S**queeze, **S**weep. Stay aware of the surroundings for hazards as you enter and exit the area.

Light Search & Rescue

Make rescuer safety your primary concern. Always use the buddy system.





1. Take a lap around the building to identify the level of damage to the structure. Can a search and rescue operation be safely attempted by CERT members?
 - a. **If not safe**, only call out to victims within the structure. Do not enter.
 - b. **If safe**, (1) ask bystanders if they know about possible people inside if they know the layout of the structure; (2) be systematic; call out "If anyone can hear my voice, come here;" (3) stop and listen carefully; and (4) triangulate to see all angles of the situation.




Use the following standard Search & Rescue marking system:

STRUCTURE MARKING SYSTEM

Begin by using orange spray paint or lumber crayon to draw a 2-foot box. Then use the box to alert subsequent rescuers to building conditions or earlier findings.



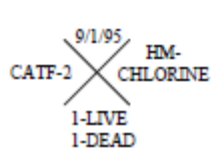
-  Damage is minor with little danger of further collapse. Structure is safe for search and rescue operations.
-  Damage is significant. Shoring, bracing or removal of hazards is necessary.
-  Structure is not safe for search and rescue operations. Remote search operations may proceed at significant risk. Safe havens and evacuation routes should be established.
-  Direction to safely enter building.

HM Hazardous material is present. Type of hazard may also be noted.

 9/1/95 0800
HM-CHLORINE
CATF-2

Write date, time, hazardous materials present and team identification on the right-hand side of the box. For example, this building was searched Sept. 1, 1995, at 8a.m., chlorine was found, and the search was conducted by Los Angeles County CATF-2.

SEARCH MARKING SYSTEM

-  Search operations are currently in progress. (ORANGE)
 -  Personnel have exited the structure. (ORANGE)
- 
- Left quadrant – Team identifier.
 - Top quadrant – Time and date team left the structure.
 - Right quadrant – Hazards found.
 - Bottom Quadrant - Number of live and dead victims still inside the structure. *Written in Black Marker or lumber crayon/chalk*

Source: Federal Emergency Management Agency Urban Search and Rescue Task Force System.

When performing a rescue, create a safe rescue environment by removing fallen debris and shoring up precarious walls. Triage and stabilize victims as soon as possible. Think of the best way of removing a victim, rather than “jumping in” haphazardly. Always assume that a victim has a spinal injury until you find evidence to the contrary.



Triage & Simple Treatment

Goal: Do the most good for the greatest amount of people in the least amount of time.

Triage should take less than one minute per victim!

Perform triage by checking ABS: **A**irway, **B**leeding, **S**hock. Perform simple treatment to stabilize these three killers. Sort victims into three categories for treatment: Immediate (**I**), Delayed (**D**), Dead (**DEAD**).

Wearing appropriate protective gear, at an arm's distance, shake the victim and shout, "Do you hear me?" to check for responsiveness. Then check ABS:

Airway:

1. If the victim is unconscious but breathing, mark as "I"/ "Immediate" and continue triage.
2. If the victim is conscious and breathing, count the rate. If greater than 30 respirations per minute, mark "I" / "Immediate." If breaths are less than 30 per minute, continue triage.
3. If the victim is not breathing, position the airway using the head-tilt/chin-lift method and check for obstructions. Look, listen, and feel for respirations. Check the breathing rate if the maneuver was successful; if not successful, repeat once. Move on to the next victim if the second attempt was unsuccessful.

Bleeding: Take immediate action to control severe bleeding.

1. Put pressure with a clean dressing at the point of the wound and/or at pressure points.
2. Elevate the wound above the level of the heart.

Note: Do all of this quickly, remembering that you are only doing simple treatment during triage. The Field Treatment Unit will follow up with additional care.

Shock: Shock is the state whereby the body is unable to supply enough oxygen to meet tissue needs.

1. Check the mental status of the victim by giving a simple command such as "squeeze my hand." Unconsciousness or confusion may indicate shock.
2. Look for rapid but weak pulse and respiration. Abnormally rapid but weak pulse and respiration (above 30 per minute) indicate shock.
3. Check for adequate circulation by performing the Blanch Test: Press on the fingernail until normal color is gone and note how long it takes for normal color to return. A capillary refill time of greater than 2 seconds indicates the need for immediate treatment.
4. For treatment of shock, have the victim lie flat with the feet elevated, and maintain body temperature.



Medical Treatment

Attend to “I” or “Immediate” victims first. Perform a head-to-toe assessment, checking the following body parts from top to bottom: (1) head, (2) neck, (3) shoulders, (4) chest, (5) arms, (6) abdomen, (7) pelvis, (8) legs, and (9) back. Talk to the victim to assess consciousness and to gather information about injuries. *Head-to-toe assessments should take less than one minute per victim!* Perform treatment on a victim’s injuries according to highest priority until he/she is stable enough to be considered “D” or “Delayed.” Then move on.

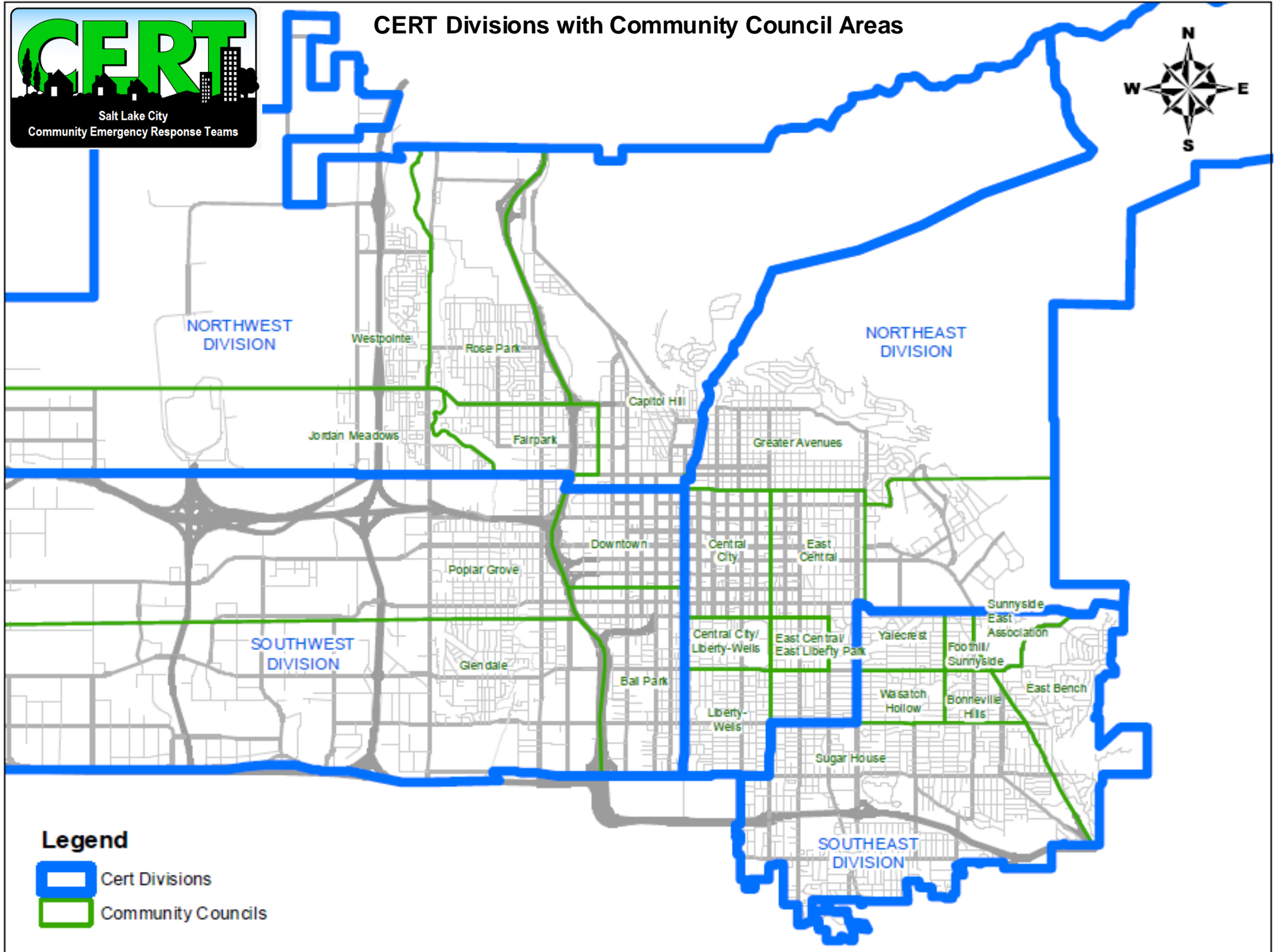
Helping Others Cope

The emotional trauma, or stress, of a disaster can be the biggest challenge. Here are a few suggestions to help others cope:



1. Listen intently to a victim’s physical and emotional concerns.
2. Take emotions seriously, regardless of how illogical or exaggerated disaster victims’ perceptions may be. Validate victims’ emotions by reassuring them that their emotions are natural and that many people have similar feelings.
3. Give victims a sense of control by helping them help themselves and others.
4. Give victims hope by maintaining an attitude of realistic optimism. Speak truthfully about the reality of the disaster that has just occurred but remain optimistic for the future, both near and far.



CERT Divisions with Community Council Areas



Legend

-  Cert Divisions
-  Community Councils