



CERT Support Committee Guide to Basic Principles Responder Rehabilitation

Purpose and Scope:

This document provides an overview and guidance for items that need to be considered with establishing responder rehabilitation capabilities.

Responder rehabilitation refers to the process of providing physical, mental, and emotional support and recovery for emergency responders, such as firefighters, paramedics, police officers, and other personnel involved in physically demanding and traumatic situations. The goal of responder rehabilitation is to ensure the well-being and resilience of these individuals so that they can continue to perform their duties effectively and maintain their overall health.

Some resources to develop rehabilitation approaches are suggested in this document. However, Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) should not be limited to what is given as examples in this document.

Definitions:

This section lists the standard definitions of some terms that will be used in this document.

Term	Definition
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
CERT Program	The structure to provide CERT training and / or the sponsoring of teams operated by a public safety agency.
CERT Team	A group of people who perform tasks to work toward accomplishing a common mission or specific objective.
Policy	Set of written instructions that describes the step-by-step process that must be taken to properly perform a routine activity. SOPs should be followed the exact same way every time to guarantee that the organization remains consistent and in compliance with industry regulations and business standards.
Recovery	The process of returning a member's physiological and psychological (mind) states to

Term	Definition
	levels that indicate the person is able to perform additional emergency tasks, be reassigned, or released without any adverse effects.
Rehabilitation	An intervention designed to mitigate against the physical, physiological and emotional stress of responding to an incident. in order to sustain a responder's energy, improve performance and decrease the likelihood of on-scene injury or death.
Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG)	Set of written instructions that provides guidance on how a task is to be performed. SOGs can be modified in response to site specific conditions.

Reference Documents:

This section lists reference documents that may be used with this document.

File Title	Description
FA_314	US Fire Administration Emergency Incident Rehabilitation
NFPA 1500	Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program
NFPA 1561	Standard of Emergency Medical Services Incident Management Services
NFPA 1584	Recommended Practice on the Rehabilitation of Members Operating at Incident Scene Operations and Training Exercises

Related Training:

This section lists available training that may be used with this document.

Training Title	Description
IA CERT Responder Rehabilitation	Iowa tailoring of the FEMA Firefighter Rehab supplemental training.

Background:

Responder rehabilitation programs typically includes a range of services and interventions designed to address the unique challenges faced by emergency responders. These may include:

- Physical recovery
- Mental health support
- Fatigue management

It is important to recognize that the well-being of all individuals working in demanding and high-stress roles should be prioritized. Implementing rehabilitation programs and support systems for these professionals can help mitigate the potential negative effects of their work on their mental and physical health, ultimately promoting their overall resilience and well-being.

The CERT team provides assistance to operate responder rehabilitation following the established plan. Examples:

- Staffing
- Equipment
- Setting up / tearing down the rehab site
- Supplies

This guide is focused on public safety responder rehabilitation. However, consider using the same capability to provide cooling stations an event such as 5K runs, county fair etc. Make sure to include details for these type of events in your planning, SOPs or SOGs.

Rehabilitation Standards:

The National Fire Protection Association 1584 Standard on the Rehabilitation Process for Members During Emergency Operations and Training Exercises sets the standard for the operation of a rehabilitation site.

The scope of NFPA 1584 is:

- 1.1 This standard establishes the minimum criteria for developing and implementing a rehabilitation process for fire department members at incident scene operations and training exercises.

Key components of NFPA 1584 are:

- 1) Relief from climactic conditions
- 2) Rest and recovery
- 3) Cooling or rewarming
- 4) Re-hydration
- 5) Calorie and electrolyte replacement
- 6) Medical monitoring
- 7) EMS treatment in accordance with local protocol
- 8) Member accountability
- 9) Release from rehab to return to duty

It's important to note that NFPA 1584 provides guidance for responder rehabilitation specific to fire departments, but the principles outlined in the standard can be applied to other emergency response organizations as well. As with any standard, it's crucial for organizations to consult the specific requirements and recommendations within NFPA 1584 and adapt them to their own operational needs, resources, and local regulations.

Establishing Rehabilitation Capability:

Developing a responder rehabilitation program requires careful planning and consideration.

Here is a list of steps that a CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) can follow to develop such a program:

- 1) Identify the Need: Determine the specific reasons why a responder rehabilitation program is necessary. Consider factors such as the nature of emergencies in the community, the physical and mental stress responders face, and the potential long-term impact on their well-being.
- 2) Expand / create a relationship with the public safety agencies in your area. Discuss with them responder rehabilitation and what your team can do for them when needed.
- 3) Research Best Practices: Conduct research on existing responder rehabilitation programs. Identify successful models and best practices that can be adapted to the CERT team's needs.
- 4) Assemble a Team: Form a dedicated team responsible for developing the responder rehabilitation program. Include representatives from the CERT team, local healthcare professionals, the responding agencies that will be served, and any other relevant stakeholders.
- 5) Assess Resources: Evaluate the resources available for implementing the program. Consider factors such as funding, personnel, facilities, and equipment needed to support the program effectively. Identify any gaps that need to be addressed.
- 6) Design Program Components: Based on the identified needs and objectives, develop the specific components of the program.
- 7) Establish Partnerships: Identify potential partners and collaborators who can support the program.
- 8) Develop Program Policies and Guidelines: Create clear policies and guidelines for the program. Address all phases of deployment in the documents. All parties who will provide or use the rehabilitation services need to be involved in the development. Ensure that the policies and guidelines align with existing emergency response procedures. All the program policies and guidelines need to be practiced with all parties. This ensures everyone is operating under the same plan!

- 9) Training: Provide comprehensive training to the team that will staff a rehabilitation site. Include set up, operation, tear down and reporting.
- 10) Evaluate and Refine: Continuously evaluate the program's effectiveness and gather feedback from team members and supported agencies. Use this feedback to refine the program, address any identified issues, and enhance its overall impact.
- 11) Monitor and Sustain: Implement a system for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the program. Ensure that the program remains sustainable by securing necessary resources and adapting to changing needs over time. Maintaining your programs volunteer base is a large part of sustainment.

Remember that developing a responder rehabilitation program requires customization to the specific needs and resources of the CERT team and the community it serves.

When to Activate Rehabilitation:

The NFPA 1584 standard specifies certain criteria that trigger the activation of responder rehabilitation. These criteria include factors such as the duration of the incident or exercise, the type and level of physical exertion, environmental conditions (such as extreme heat or cold), and other risk factors that may impact the responders' health and safety. The decision to activate CERT to establish a rehabilitation site resides with the incident commander. No deployment should occur until the IC makes that call.

It is recommended that rehabilitation be provided at scheduled intervals during extended operations or training exercises. The specific intervals may vary depending on factors such as the nature of the incident, environmental conditions, and the physical exertion involved. Examples of scheduled intervals for rehabilitation could include every 30 minutes to 2 hours, depending on the situation.

Incident-specific factors can also influence the activation of responder rehabilitation. These factors include the type and scale of the incident, the availability of resources and personnel, and the operational priorities at the scene. Incident commanders or designated personnel should evaluate these factors to determine when and how to activate rehabilitation services. Remember, large, complex, or long-term incidents such as a missing person search may also benefit from the activation of a rehabilitation site.

NFPA 1584 Guideline #1

The company or crew must self-rehab (rest with hydration) for at least 10 minutes following:

- Depletion of one 30-minute SCBA cylinder
- Or after 20 minutes of intense work without wearing an SCBA
- Company Officer (CO) or crew leader must ensure that all members are fit to return to duty before resuming operations

NFPA 1584 Guideline #2

Company or crew must enter formal rehab area, drink appropriate fluids, be medically evaluated, and rest for minimum of 20 minutes after any of the following:

- Depletion of two 30-minute SCBA cylinders
- Depletion of one 45- or 60-minute SCBA cylinder
- Whenever encapsulating chemical protective clothing is worn
- Following 40 minutes of intense work without SCBA

Variation on Guidelines 1-2

If members enter rehab area prior to going through two 30-minute SCBA cylinders (or any other of the criteria listed in Guideline #2):

- Still must be medically evaluated and drink fluids
- However, rest period may be lowered to only 10 minutes, if they are fit to return to duty

Suggested Supplies:

Many of the supplies required for a rehabilitation site will be utilized year-round. Others will be seasonal. Remember consider the types of incidents that public safety agencies may ask you to establish a rehabilitation site for.

Use the list below to help your team develop your essential year-round and seasonal supplies.

- 1) Equipment bags
- 2) Tarps or flags to designate rehabilitation area
- 3) Clipboards, pens and post-it notes
- 4) Phone book/staff phone numbers
- 5) Rehabilitation notebook with check in/out sheets for responders and team members
- 6) A watch / cell phone clock with a seconds displayed
- 7) Handheld radios
- 8) Sports drinks
- 9) Water without ice (if cold use hot beverages)
- 10) Snack bars, consider bananas if they can be quickly picked up
- 11) Scissors
- 12) Disposable Gloves, multiple sizes
- 13) Flashlights
- 14) Hand sanitizer
- 15) Towels
- 16) Ice packs/warm packs
- 17) Food, if prolonged scene time
- 18) Disposable drinking cups
- 19) Garbage bags
- 20) Ice chest with ice if possible
- 21) Chairs or benches for resting
- 22) Pop up awning / sun shade
- 23) EMS Equipment, may be brought to site by EMS or part of Rehabilitation equipment stash. Used by trained personnel only.
 - a) Oxygen and airway adjuncts
 - b) Tympanic thermometer

- c) Blood pressure cuff and stethoscope
- d) Pulse oximeter
- e) Notebook / forms for vitals

A dedicated trailer or prepacked totes are options to keep the equipment and supplies ready to deploy at a moment's notice.

It is important to regularly check and restock supplies to ensure they are in good condition and readily available when needed. Additionally, customization of supplies based on the specific needs of responders in your region or organization is essential for optimal care and support.

Local Partnerships and Sustainment:

When deploying a responder rehabilitation capability, a CERT team will require various resources to support the program effectively. Using the list of resources below, think of local resources you can partner with.

Physical Space: Dedicated facilities or designated areas where responder rehabilitation equipment and supplies can be stored. Also consider locations that can be used for hands on training activities. Remember to include the agencies that utilize the rehabilitation services.

Funding: Financial resources to cover the costs associated with deploying and sustaining the responder rehabilitation capability. Look at the various sources of funding that can be utilized. Also, project what the costs may be for a deployment. What supplies will the served agencies supply? Will they reimburse any costs? Financial planning is important, run it like a business.

Area Rehabilitation Team:

Do you have a small CERT program with few members? Is having rehabilitation capability something you really want to have in place but it will only be used once or twice a year? Consider having local area programs joining together to create an area rehabilitation team. This may unlock numerous advantages that can significantly enhance their ability to support responders during and after incidents. By pooling resources, expertise, and dedication, these combined efforts create a collaborative and efficient response system. Here are the advantages of CERT teams joining together to establish an area rehabilitation team with the necessary equipment and supplies.

- 1) **Enhanced capacity and coverage:** By uniting multiple CERT teams, an area rehabilitation team can expand its operational capacity and coverage area. This ensures that responders across a broader region have access to reliable and timely support during critical incidents. By combining resources, the area team can provide a more comprehensive and sustainable responder rehabilitation program.
- 2) **Shared expertise and knowledge:** Each CERT team bring diverse skills and experiences to the table. When

they join together, team members can share their expertise, knowledge, and best practices, resulting in a more robust and effective responder rehab program. Collaborating across teams facilitates learning from each other's experiences and promotes continuous improvement.

- 3) **Resource optimization:** Establishing an area rehabilitation team allows for better utilization and optimization of resources. CERT teams can share equipment, supplies, and training materials, reducing duplication and maximizing efficiency. This collaborative approach ensures that limited resources are allocated strategically, benefiting a larger number of responders in the region.
- 4) **Improved coordination and communication:** During emergencies, effective coordination and communication between CERT teams and other emergency response agencies are crucial. An area rehabilitation team enables streamlined coordination and communication channels. By aligning procedures and protocols, team members can work seamlessly with local fire departments and other response organizations, ensuring a cohesive and integrated response.
- 5) **Cost Sharing and Resource Acquisition:** By joining together, CERT teams can pool their financial resources, making it easier to acquire the necessary equipment and supplies for a comprehensive rehab program. This collective effort opens up opportunities for grants, sponsorships, and fundraising initiatives, which can be more successful with a larger combined network.
- 6) **Long-Term Sustainability:** Sustaining a rehabilitation program requires ongoing maintenance, training, and replenishment of supplies. By forming an area team, CERT members can distribute these responsibilities among a larger group. This shared commitment ensures the long-term sustainability of the program, minimizing the burden on individual teams and promoting a continuous cycle of readiness and support.
- 7) **Increased Community Impact:** By establishing an area responder rehabilitation team, CERT teams can have a more significant impact on the safety and well-being of their communities. Emergency responders are essential pillars of community resilience, and by supporting their physical and mental health, CERT teams contribute to a stronger emergency response system and a safer environment for all residents.