CERT Support Committee
Guide to Basic Principles
Shelter Operations

Purpose and Scope:

The operation of emergency shelters helps communities provide a safe and secure place for individuals and families to stay before, during and / or after a disaster.

This document provides an overview and guidance for items that need to be considered with establishing shelter operations capabilities. When managing a shelter, it is important to have preestablished plans for resourcing shelters for safety, accessibility, feeding, casework, and other needs that families would seek when coming to a shelter. Some of resources to develop good approaches to basic principles in sheltering 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.
Emergency Shelter	An emergency shelter is a place for people to live temporarily when they cannot live in their previous residence.
Post-disaster emergency shelter	Often provided by organizations or governmental emergency management departments, in response to natural

Term	Definition
	disasters, such as a flood or earthquake.
Primary Shelter	A shelter location that meets all the applicable standards for an emergency shelter.
Secondary Shelter	A shelter location that does not meet all the applicable standards for an emergency shelter.

Reference Documents:

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

File Title	Description
ADA Checklist for Emergency Shelters.pdf	This document provides informal guidance to assist you in understanding the ADA and the Department's regulation. However, this technical assistance does not constitute a legal interpretation of the statute.
American-Red-Cross-Sheltering-Handbook.pdf	This handbook provides guidance for Red Cross shelter operations, including supervision of a shelter. It presents general information about the shelter worker's role in the sheltering process and the relief operation and includes tools and checklists to help you plan, open, operate and close a Red Cross shelter.
FEMA-Disaster-Sheltering-Housing-Strategy-DR4562.pdf	The strategy will be a guide in determining the need for temporary housing options beyond congregate sheltering.
Shelter-Field-Guide-508_f3.pdf	The Shelter Field Guide is intended to provide

File Title	Description
	organizations without prior disaster experience with a basic overview of shelter operations that will help them to open and manage an emergency shelter.

Related Training:

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

Training Title	Description
K0419 – Shelter Field Guide Training for State and Local Communities	This course was developed by the American Red Cross and FEMA to train participants in sheltering practices and techniques. It is designed for use with its companion piece, the Shelter Field Guide.
Community Mass Care and Emergency Assistance (G-108) FEMA Emergency Management Institute	This course provides training for local communities to prepare for and manage mass care and emergency assistance functions effectively. The goal is to prepare community agencies, organizations, and businesses to work together in coordination with emergency management and traditional mass care providers to plan and provide mass care and emergency assistance services to those affected by disaster.
Emergency Support Function (ESF) #6—Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing, and Human Services (IS-806) FEMA Emergency Management Institute.	The purpose of this course is to familiarize students with the function and composition of ESF #6— Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing, and Human Services. This course will enable students to describe the overall purpose and scope of ESF #6; identify the supplemental assistance ESF #6 provides to state, tribal, and local governments; identify typical activities accomplished by ESF #6 resources; and describe the types of

Training Title	Description
	partnerships formed between ESF #6 and other response agencies and organizations.
Guide to Points of Distribution (IS-26) FEMA Emergency Management Institute.	This guide was developed to support the Points of Distribution (POD) overview video and provide an in depth look into the planning, operations, and demobilization stages of a POD mission. The lessons detail the staffing and procedures any state will need to plan for, execute, and shut down POD operations. The guide also includes key lessons such as safety, equipment, and resource accountability and informs the reader about the "Adopt a POD" program being used by the state of Washington.
Including People with Disabilities & Others with Access & Functional Needs in Disaster Operations (IS-368) FEMA Emergency Management Institute	The purpose of this course is to increase awareness and understanding of the need for full inclusion of disaster survivors and staff who are people with disabilities and people with access and functional needs. The course provides an overview of disabilities and access and functional needs and explains how disaster staff can apply inclusive practices in their disaster assignments.
Overview of Mass Care/Emergency Assistance (IS-405) FEMA Emergency Management Institute.	This course provides an introduction to mass care and emergency assistance support, with a focus on the whole community, by outlining the importance of collaboration and coordination between government, nonprofit, public, and private sectors.
American Red Cross Partner Shelter Training	The course introduces the roles and responsibilities for opening, operating, and closing a shelter during a disaster. There is a focus on

Training Title	Description
	what new shelter workers need to know to work in a shelter. For additional information contact your local American Red Cross representative.

Background:

CERT programs across the country incorporate civilian auxiliaries from local community members to support various emergency responses. The Federal program that supports CERT is called Citizen Corps. In the state of Iowa, the agency that houses the Citizen Corps program is the Iowa Disaster Human Resource Council (IDHRC), which is the State VOAD.

A general guide to establishing principles for emergency sheltering, is to consider whole community approaches to resourcing the basic needs that would sustain a sheltered population. Whole community approaches, which is inviting community organizations that may have volunteers, access to resources, and experience in disaster sheltering services, would benefit the community with their inclusion. Please utilize the guidance in this document to develop a CERT local Whole Community Partnership strategy.

Shelter Pre-Planning

The local Emergency Management agency will have pre-planned locations for both primary and secondary shelters. Agreements will already be in place with these locations.

High Level Shelter Pre-Planning Steps

1) Needs assessment
2) Resource assessment
3) Gap analysis
4) Identify community facilities for use as disaster shelters.
5) Complete a pre-disaster Shelter Facility Survey and Shelter Agreement for each identified shelter.
6) Recruit and train sufficient staff to sustain a shelter operation for at least 72 hours.
7) Set up vendor accounts to provide food and other supplies that will be necessary at the shelter.
8) Prepare shelter kits containing all of the supplies necessary to open and run a short-term shelter.

It is recommended to work with your local community partner agencies to plan the initial operation of any shelters with local resources.

When CERT sheltering programs take the responsibility of managing emergency shelters, Items such as screening shelter staff, required supplies, required liability insurance etc. should be part of the plans.

When managing a shelter is not in the long-term strategy of disaster response for CERT programs, it is recommended that a Lead Agency be identified in the community such as the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, or other community non-governmental organizations that would have pre-established agreements in place with the local county emergency management agency.

CERT Programs and Teams need to have pre-plans, Standard Operating Guidelines and training in place before the need arises to set up an emergency shelter. The training must also include the transition of the shelter operations to your partner sheltering Lead Agency.

Shelter and Mass Care Resource List:

Refer to the Reference Documents and Related Training sections of this Guide. The listed documents will provide additional information for your program / team to establish an emergency shelter capability. The related training can be used as a starting point to develop your program / team training plan for shelter staffing and operations.

This section lists reference documents that may be used with this document. Note these documents are not provided in the reference section of the CERT Committee website like the ones listed on the Reference Documents table of this document.

Note the provided URLs were tested at the time of this document's creation. As website are updated over time you may find a bad link. If that occurs search the internet using the document title to find the latest version.

THE NATIONAL MASS CARE STRATEGY
Available online at
https://nationalmasscarestrategy.org/
> The National Mass Care Strategy provides a unified approach to the delivery of Mass Care services by establishing common goals, fostering inclusive collaborative planning, and identifying resource needs to build the national mass care capacity engaging the whole community including under-served and vulnerable populations.