

Non-Profit News

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By Jennifer D. Ryan

Executive Director

American Red Cross, Lee County Chapter

jryan@leeredcross.org

Now is the Time to Get Trained in Disaster Response

In early February tornadoes cut across Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi, leaving devastation in their wake. Just a few weeks later, Central Alabama saw a F3 tornado touch down, impacting 16 Alabama Counties, most heavily the Prattville area. Last week Atlanta experienced several tornadoes and volunteers and emergency responders quickly leapt into action to respond. All the while, individuals and families in our community and beyond have lost their homes to residential fires.

Despite our knowledge and technological advances, we just can't seem to stop "Mother Nature". Storms continue to occur and we must build our resources and capacity to respond whenever and wherever the tragedy occurs. How do we do that?

Disaster volunteers don't come from some secret order, they are members of our community, just like you and I. What sets them apart is that they have the compassion and drive to get up, get trained and get out there when needed. If you would like to volunteer in disaster services, now is the perfect time to get started. Programs are being offered by the Lee County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) and the Lee County Red Cross to help train community responders and to increase our capacity to help those in need.

The Lee County EMA is conducting Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training beginning April 3rd, and running every Monday and Thursday from 6-9 pm at the EMA office located at 908 Avenue B in Opelika. The class will conclude on Monday, April 28th with a full-scale exercise.

CERT is designed to teach citizens how to prepare themselves and their families for an emergency. CERT teaches basic skills to save and sustain life in the event of an emergency. When a large event takes place, it may overwhelm the local professional first responders. If that happens, citizens in each community must be prepared to help each other. CERT gives you that knowledge, and helps you apply it through hands on activities and exercises. This training can be used in everyday situations, such as helping crash victims and assisting family and friends at home or work when needed.

Courses taught include fire safety and suppression, emergency medical training, disaster psychology, search and rescue techniques, emergency communications, and more. The course also offers 24 CEU's for those who need continuing education credits. If you are unable to make one or two of the classes, EMA will work with you to make them up.

CERT training is open to all residents living in and around Lee County, and is free. For more information or to sign up, contact Chris Tate at 334-749-8161 or ctate@leecoema-al.org.

To further your education, The Lee County Red Cross and Southern Union Community College are hosting a Disaster Training Institute May 6-9 at Southern Union's Health Sciences Building. Classes offered will include Disaster Assessment, Mass Care Overview, Disaster Public Affairs, Shelter Operations, Emergency Response Vehicle Operation, Mass Casualty Disasters, Disaster Fundraising, Disaster Health Services, Psychological First Aid, Individual Client Services and more. If you are interested in getting trained to respond to disasters with the Red Cross, call 334-749-9981 for more information. The disaster training classes are free, but you must pre-register to attend.

If you would more information on any Red Cross classes or events visit www.leeredcross.org or call 334-749-9981. Have a good week!

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