Salem CERT Advisory Group Handbook

Introduction

The Salem Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program, managed by the City of Salem's Emergency Manager (EM) under the authority of the Salem Fire Department, is dedicated to building a resilient community prepared for emergencies. The CERT Advisory Group (CAG), comprising six members, supports the EM by setting priorities, managing tasks, and strengthening the CERT program and its membership.

This handbook outlines the CAG's structure, roles, goal hierarchy, and operating procedures, formalizing responsibilities while maintaining a collaborative, inclusive culture. It serves as a guide for current and future CAG members to ensure continuity and effectiveness.

Mission of the CERT Advisory Group

The CAG's mission is to support the CERT program in building a resilient Salem community prepared for emergencies. This mission, answering "Why do we exist?" is broad, enduring, and aspirational, aligning with the CERT program's vision. The CAG achieves this by:

- Providing strategic input and operational support to the EM.
- Setting and achieving goals in training, communications, community engagement, logistics, operations, and organization.
- Distributing workload to allow the EM to focus on strategic oversight.
- Fostering a collaborative environment that empowers CERT members and enhances community resilience.

CERT Advisory Group Structure

The CAG consists of six members with roles designed to balance leadership and program management. The structure is as follows:

1. **Advisory Team Meeting Facilitator**:
   - Facilitates CAG meetings to ensure focus and inclusivity.
   - Responsibilities:
     - Schedule and lead monthly meetings, preparing agendas in advance.
     - Consolidate and distribute meeting minutes to CAG and EM.
     - Promote collaboration and open discussion.
     - Serve as an Advisory Team Leader.
   - Term: Rotates quarterly among members.
2. **Advisory Team Leaders**:
   - Oversee specific goals to drive execution.
   - Responsibilities:
     - Develop and manage strategies and projects within assigned goals.

- Coordinate with CERT volunteers and external partners as needed.
- Provide project updates to the CAG.
- Collaborate with other leaders to ensure alignment across categories.
    - o Assignment: Goals are assigned based on expertise and interest.
3. **Meeting Logistics**:
    - o Frequency: Monthly meetings with ad-hoc meetings as needed.
    - o Format: Informal, discussion-based meetings with a structured agenda.
    - o Minutes: Meeting Facilitator with input and approval of CAG.
    - o Location: Meetings occur at various locations or virtually (e.g., via Zoom), decided by group consensus.
4. **Decision-Making**:
    - o Decisions are made collaboratively, aiming for consensus. The EM holds final authority on CERT program decisions.
    - o Disagreements are resolved through open discussion, facilitated by the Meeting Facilitator.

Hierarchy of Goals

The CAG aligns its efforts through a goal hierarchy, ensuring all activities support the mission. The hierarchy includes:

1. **Mission/Vision (Top Level)**: The overarching purpose and future state (5+ years), as outlined above, guiding all activities.
2. **Goals (High Level)**: Measurable outcomes supporting the mission, set annually by AG/EM (1-3 years), across six categories: Training, Communications, Community Engagement, Logistics, Operations, and Organization. Goals are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound).
3. **Strategies (Mid-Level)**: Plans to achieve goals, including resource allocation and priorities, developed by the AG/EM and managed by Advisory Team Leaders for (6-18 months).
4. **Projects (Execution Level)**: Temporary endeavors with defined scopes, budgets, and timelines (months to a year) to implement strategies.
5. **Tasks (Bottom Level)**: Actionable, short-term steps (days to weeks) to complete projects, assigned to individuals or teams.

Each year, the CAG and EM meet to establish or revise the mission/vision and goals, ensuring alignment across the hierarchy.

Goal Categories with Examples

Goals are organized into six categories. Below are illustrative examples of goals, strategies, projects, and tasks, customized annually based on needs:

- **Training**
  Goal: Deliver a training schedule by Jan 30, 2026, to enhance skills.
  Strategy: Coordinate accessible, relevant programs.
  Project: Develop 2026 training calendar; arrange guest instructors.
  Tasks: Schedule sessions, prepare materials, track feedback.
- **Communications**
  Goal: Deploy a citywide CERT radio network.
  Strategy: Assess existing systems and address gaps.
  Project: Develop a CERT radio communications plan.
  Tasks: Draft plan content, test equipment, update webpage.
- **Community Engagement**
  Goal: Host two outreach events annually; represent at fairs.
  Strategy: Leverage partnerships and feedback for outreach.
  Project: Set up recruitment booth; plan mock disaster drill.
  Tasks: Design booth materials, coordinate volunteer shifts, promote on social media.
- **Logistics**
  Goal: Maintain up-to-date inventory for readiness.
  Strategy: Conduct audits with digital tracking and Fire Department support.
  Project: Perform annual supply audit; develop check-in system.
  Tasks: Count items, update spreadsheets, test check-in app.
- **Operations**
  Goal: Develop protocols for emergency mobilization.
  Strategy: Update protocols with leadership training.
  Project: Revise activation protocol; train team leaders.
  Tasks: Edit protocol documents, conduct training, simulate deployments.
- **Organization**
  Goal: Support recruitment and process documentation.
  Strategy: Strengthen structure through mentorship and reviews.
  Project: Update handbook annually; establish mentorship program.
  Tasks: Revise handbook, pair mentors, organize orientations.

Operating Procedures

To ensure smooth operations within the goal hierarchy, the AG follows these procedures:

1. **Goal Management**:
   - Goals are developed annually with the EM and CAG, categorized, and assigned to Advisory Team Leaders.
   - Leaders propose strategies, subject to EM approval, and develop projects to achieve goals.

- o Projects and tasks are tracked using shared tools (e.g., Google Sheets, Trello).
- o Leaders recruit CERT volunteers to support projects and tasks, ensuring broad participation.

2. **Communication with the Emergency Manager**:
   - o The CAG provides updates to the EM as needed via emails and meetings, summarizing progress and plans.
   - o The EM is invited to key meetings (e.g., annual goal-setting, major project reviews) for guidance.
3. **Engaging CERT Members**:
   - o The CAG gathers input through surveys, CERT Council meetings, or informal channels to shape goals and strategies.
   - o Major initiatives are communicated to members in advance to build support.
   - o Volunteers are recruited to assist with projects and tasks.
4. **Onboarding New CAG Members**:
   - o If a member steps down, the EM and CAG select a replacement from active CERT members.
   - o New members receive this handbook and a one-on-one orientation, including the goal hierarchy.
5. **Evaluation and Improvement**:
   - o Semi-annual reviews (e.g., January and July) assess progress across the hierarchy, with adjustments as needed.
   - o Feedback from the EM, CERT members, and CAG informs updates to roles, goals, or processes.

Tools and Resources

The CAG uses the following tools to support operations:

- **Google Drive**: Stores meeting notes, project plans, and this handbook.
- **Trello or Google Sheets**: Tracks tasks, projects, and deadlines.
- **Email and Zoom**: Facilitates communication and virtual meetings.
- **Salemoregoncert.org**: Communicates with CERT members and the Salem community.
- **Salem Fire Department Resources**: Provides meeting spaces, equipment, and administrative support.

Code of Conduct

CAG members commit to:

- Collaborating respectfully, valuing diverse perspectives.
- Communicating openly and promptly with the group and EM.
- Acting in the best interest of the CERT program and Salem community.
- Maintaining confidentiality for sensitive information (e.g., emergency protocols).

Amendment Process

The handbook may be amended by:

- Proposing changes during a regular meeting, followed by CAG discussion and consensus.
- Submitting amendments to the EM for final approval.
- Updating and distributing the revised handbook to all members and posting it on salemoregoncert.org.

Approval

This handbook was adopted by the Salem CERT Advisory Group on August 08, 2025, with approval from the Salem Emergency Manager.

Last Updated: August 08, 2025