



## East Hartford Housing Authority Senior CERT

The East Hartford Housing Authority (EHHA) Senior CERT has been recently reactivated after a 5-month hiatus. This group consists of volunteer residents from eight senior housing complexes, representing over 800 residents. Their primary purpose is to bring back to their respective complex the benefits of the training and education they have been receiving the past four years in emergency preparedness, both natural and man-made. Additionally, these CERT members act as an initial contact point for first responders who need up-to-date situational information on both the residents and the building.

Examples of their training are as follows:

- ◆ Tabletop exercise in Hurricane preparedness with a trip into the State Armory to view how the State responded to an announced hurricane in their Operations Center.
- ◆ As East Hartford is a Host Town Community for Waterford and Montville should an event occur at the Dominion Nuclear Plant, our group worked with Dominion in a mock exercise, setting up registration, sheltering, processing lines etc.
- ◆ Several First Aid courses were given by the Red Cross and refreshed from time to time.
- ◆ East Hartford Fire Dept. came with their fire pan and instructions and hands-on fire extinguishing were given to the Senior CERT.
- ◆ To impress on the members of the group how important observation and reaction is in a threatening situation, with the cooperation of the Police Dept. two plain-clothed policemen staged an invasion of our building, "snatched" a purse (this was prearranged with the owner of the purse) and took off in a waiting car. When they came back several minutes later, they were amazed at the quick and correct observation our group displayed. At the same time, the mailbox set outside a small trashcan, and a duffel bag inside on the windowsill and members were cautioned as to how to treat a suspicious article.
- ◆ Sheltering-in-place is an important part of the training as most complexes have a community room where residents would meet in an emergency: many have generators so there would be electricity available; some do not.
- ◆ Some of our Senior members have been called upon to participate in Townwide events, such as assistance at Flu Clinics, and a Pandemic exercise held last summer because of their training.

Recently, we were fortunate enough to receive 1,000 commercial "snaplights" (also known as glowsticks) through a grant to the EHHA Senior CERT from Cyalume. This enabled us to kick-off our "Light Up" program, with our Senior CERT members to distribute in their complex.

As a matter of interest, five days after this program occurred one of the represented complexes lost power due to a construction error and we were called upon to deliver a quantity of the snaplights in the event they did not regain electricity by the evening.

Two very important responsibilities our seniors have is compiling a list of special needs residents and keeping it updated, and turning in an Incident Report when they have responded to emergencies in their complex. Their knowledge and assistance has made quite a difference in the safety of their neighbors.