



CERT – Doing the Greatest Good for the Greatest Number of People

Newsletter

January 2026

HAPPY NEW YEAR one & ALL ... We are again expanding our end-of-year summaries, inviting articles from your Work Group (WG) champions. WGs share leadership via their expertise, and each champion provides a unique perspective on 2025. ENJOY !!

Ray Believeau, Editor

Seminole CERT

Membership Meetings are held on the 3rd Tuesday of each month.

| | |
|---------------|---------|
| EOC Readiness | 6:15 pm |
| Social Time | 6:30 pm |
| Meeting | 7:00 pm |
| Training | 8:00 pm |



We had a solid crew of enthusiastic CERT members in our recognizable yellow shirts to set up nearly 620 flags for the 2025 Field of Honor in front of Seminole City Hall, sponsored by the Seminole Kiwanis Breakfast Club.

**Tues. January 20, 7:00 pm (social 6:30 pm)
Training to Follow Business**

Reach out to Seminole CERT at SeminoleCERT@gmail.com

Like and Share our Facebook Page at www.facebook.com/SeminoleCERT

From CERT Program Manager, Assistant Fire Chief Morelli

As we close out 2025, we need to take time to reflect on all we have accomplished this past year. We held two new CERT basic classes, added almost 15 new members to our organization, participated in blue-sky events, received training on essential topics, and held another successful hurricane seminar. I am proud of all the training we have provided for our CERT members and the community. It has been great to see so many new faces join our team, and many have stepped up to enhance our team. With the training and guidance from our board members, we will encourage our new members to become more involved in CERT and possibly run for leadership positions.

As we enter 2026, we are committed to increasing the CERT membership and its involvement in the community. Volunteers are the unsung heroes of the community, and every one of you makes a difference. I would be remiss if I did not thank our board members and CPR instructors for their continued support in managing the CERT team and in providing CPR and First Aid training to a large number of citizens. Without your dedication and commitment to the organization, we would not be successful.

Thank you for all that you do for our community. I look forward to working with all of you and providing more relevant training to our CERT members and the community. Remember to stay safe, prepared, and ready to respond.

Respectfully,
William Morelli, Assistant Fire Chief,

"1,226 total man hours were volunteered by CERT in 2025." story on page 4

From President, Devon Blackburn

As we end the year of 2025, we look back at all that we have accomplished this year and all the new things that are ahead for 2026.

This year was a wonderful year for us. We had the amazing opportunity to hold two basic CERT classes, allowing us to train and gain many new members who have been a wonderful addition to our team. We assisted Pinellas County Emergency Management, City of Seminole and Seminole Fire Department with multiple different events that allowed us to show the community who are while also giving back to our community. In addition to this, we held multiple training courses that allowed our members to learn something new and/or be refreshed.

As we look forward to 2026, it will be a time for change and growth. As we welcome new board members that will help us continue to grow and better serve our community. We hope to hold more training courses to get more members of our community trained and join other CERT teams to hold group training classes.

As I end my term as president, I want to thank every single one of you for all your hard work and dedication you have for the City of Seminole CERT Team. We appreciate all you!

Sincerely, Devon Blackburn, President
[Devon Blackburn](#)

Planning

All hands will be needed to support **Seminole Fire Rescue's Annual Open House**. This event gives CERT group an opportunity to demonstrate to the public who we are, lets them ask what we do, conveys to City of Seminole officials why we're passionate about our role, and (most importantly) sup-



We may have dodged a storm bullet, but we need to keep training and Be Ready to Serve!



From Treasurer, Dale Koning

During 2025 we continued our successful 50/50 raffles, with total on hand cash standing at \$93.76. We have a balance on the Publix card of \$25.00. Expenses were minimal as the Department and members provided refreshments.

Audit: The annual audit was performed by Board.

Note: we need "items of interest" to create more participation in our 50/50/raffle drawings. **Feel free to contact Dale with any re-giftable items after the holiday season ;)**

DFKONING63@gmail.com

ports the Fire Rescue staff in exhibiting their equipment/capabilities.

We will receive details as to the various demonstrations, activities, and food planned. It's a fun and gratifying event! Look for an email form in early March to sign-up for the **April 25 event!**

Communication - Ray Believeau

GOAL – Provide "readiness to serve" radios for training, events and real-world activation by manage status and sign in/out. Also publish the quarterly newsletter and periodic social media.

Radios – the radio "GO BAG" continues to ensure grab and go availability success. Thanks to Abe Azar / Steve Hirschfield / Bill Jensen for making / ensuring this resource is ready.

*Newsletter - In 2025 we published 4 newsletters, each with a theme that captures our successes. They were : **April** - Hurricane Prep, **July** - Fire Prevention **October** - Holiday Safety (Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year) and **January** - previous Year in Review.*

As a reminder, articles, suggestions and feedback are always welcomed. Contact *Ray Believeau*, editor, with comments.

[Ray Believeau](#)

Training - Teri Martin

GOAL - coordinate the development, delivery training to support Readiness to Serve objectives. Promote - prevention, prep, response - before, during and after disasters.

As we look back on 2025, the Seminole Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) has remained steadfast in its mission: to

ensure that when

"ensuring our disaster response is inclusive of every community member, regardless of ability"

disaster strikes, our volunteers are the most prepared, skilled, and compassionate responders in Pinellas County.

Here is a look at the training milestones of 2025 Building Inclusive Response Strategies: The first quarter of the year focused

heavily on protecting our most vulnerable citizens. In January, we partnered with Stop the Movement for a workshop on identifying and preventing human trafficking.

February and March transitioned to disability advocacy. The Disability Achievement Center (DAC) provided immersive training on assisting individuals with functional and access needs, offering our team unique insights into Special Needs Evacuations, ensuring our disaster response is inclusive of every community member, regardless of ability.

Sharpening Tactical Skills: We tackled a diverse range of emergency scenarios:

Fire Safety: April and July focused on the boots on the ground essentials, from Firefighter Rehab to the life-saving Stop the Bleed program, where members mastered tourniquets and wound packing under the guidance of Assistant Fire Chief William Morelli.



Active Threats: In May, Sgt. Dan Difrancesco from the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office led a sobering but vital session on Active Assailant response.

The Florida Heat: August's training was a timely deep dive into Heat-Related Illnesses, teaching volunteers to distinguish between heat exhaustion and the life-threatening signs of heat stroke.

Operational Excellence Hurricane Readiness: With the start of hurricane season in June, the team received a formal introduction to the city's Emergency Operations Center (EOC). This logistical foundation was furthered in September, as we clarified our roles in traffic control and public event support for Blue Sky events.

(continued on page 4)

Training (continued)

The year's training culminated in October with a complex Field Simulation.

Volunteers responded to a realistic flood scenario involving sandbag POD (Point of Distribution) setup, mobile home park evacuations, and search and rescue for a missing child. The exercise concluded with a hotwash debrief led by Fire Chief Morelli, reinforcing the importance of the Incident Command System in keeping our responders safe and our actions effective.

Have you got a training idea for 2026? Can you share some of your skills and knowledge with the group? Please reach out to the board to share your ideas.

[Teri Martin](#)

Membership/Mentoring — Karen Barth

GOAL – support member development needs, act as new member "ambassador" via mentoring and coordinate recruitment activities.

In 2025 our active membership grew by nearly **15 new members in 2 classes**. They are armed with diverse talents and are already involved. We participated in several Pinellas County Emergency Management activities, supported blue sky community events, and assisted Seminole Fire Rescue in holding a successful Open House and Hurricane Seminar.

The State of Florida Department of Emergency Management again requested the number of volunteer hours served for its annual report. Seminole CERT contributed 1,226 hours of service, which when assigned an hourly rate, revealed that **our value to the City of Seminole Fire Rescue and Pinellas County Emergency Management was \$40,458!** We completed 14 separate training opportunities for our members and trained 21 citizens. We anticipate an even more robust value to

our community in 2026. Let's continue to share our enthusiasm with the public and City of Seminole leaders, as we strive to train new citizens to reinforce our abilities in support of our community in times of emergency.

For the next term we need a person to champion the committee who will track active members, potential members, and encourage mentorship. It's a great starter role for someone who likes to meet people and utilize spreadsheets and Word. [Karen Barth](#)

Value CERT Provided to Seminole and Pinellas County in 2025

1,226 total man hours volunteered

\$40,458 compensation value

21 new citizens trained

14 separate training opportunities

EOC / Special Needs - Elaine Feld

GOAL 1- provide a "Readiness to Serve" through auditing and staffing to support protection, prevention, response, recovery, and mitigation activities of the EOC

GOAL 2- assist citizens in registering for the program who are unable to evacuate or get to a shelter on their own and provide hurricane or other disaster-related evacuation assistance

We were fortunate to escape hurricane season this year with no calls for evacuation or hurricane damage, but the importance of ensuring our processes and related training continues.

For the next term we need an additional person who can learn from Elaine and who enjoys emergency management, the computer system interface with the county, and processes. It's a great starter role.

Social

GOAL - ensure team building at meetings, training and exercises. Coordinate, via sign-up, that refreshments are provided at each meeting, training and event.

A HUGE shout out to Lisa Kerstjens and Laurie Boudreau for stepping up as newer members and putting the creative pieces together for our Disco Holiday Party featuring a 2025 version



of the Match Game. Their creativity and party spirit made it happen. Members brought a plus one, enjoyed Seminole Subs provided by Seminole Fire Rescue, delighted (and stole) at the gift exchange, and played the Match Game.

For the next term we need a creative and friendly person to adopt this committee and be head cheerleader for casual meet-ups, refreshment sign-ups and the annual party. It's a great starter role for a newer member.

Public Outreach— Ray Believeau

GOAL - enlighten the greater Seminole area Civics groups about CERT via an overview, interactive Q&A and key information on hurricane season prep.

In 2025 we added to our networking with our community Civic partners and held 2 additional civic group sessions .With each session we are seeing a new appreciation for who we are and what we do.

[Ray Believeau](#)

FFR (Firefighter Rehab) - Steve Hirschfield

Goal - assists firefighters with recouping/ resting, to become prepare to return and continue.

During 2025, CERT Firefighter Rehab operations were fortunately limited in volume. The team provided on-scene rehabilitation support to firefighters and assistance to incident victims and their families or caregivers when requested. Support activities were conducted in coordination with fire administrative staff. In 2026, we will work to improve coordination with fire administration, including clearer prioritization of duties and improved communication before, during, and after deployments. Personnel interested in joining the Firefighter Rehab team [may](#) request to be added to the text notification system.

[Steve Hirschfield](#)

Drone Support - Ray Believeau

Goal - assists Fire Rescue with drone flight, video monitoring and recording operations.

We remain ON HOLD / STAND DOWN and basically inactive with little to no fire rescue dept support call outs. This is primarily because our Part 107 member pilots use DJI (China made Drones) and the FAA has banned their use in government operations, like our City Fire Rescue. We mainly support 2 events - Pow Wow event mapping for easy and effective emergency response. The other is capturing the Kiwanis annual Field of Honor veterans and active-duty American flag installation at City Hall, post office and SPC.

[Ray Believeau](#)

How We Communicate

Events (Emergency preparedness-related and blue sky) - we email a **Google form** that provides event details and asks for your availability status. Respond and keep this in your inbox to update us if necessary. Responders will receive the IAP (incident action plan) the week of the event with specific details.

Activations/deployments and monthly meetings—we utilize **EverBridge** which will send you a text and an email to the detail we have on file for you.

Volunteer assistance for Pinellas County Emergency Management—we send an **email** with details and ask for availability

Be sure to let us know if your email address or phone number changes!

Upcoming Events

Call Downs for Pinellas County Emergency Management

February 3-6 and February 9-11, 2026 from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM

County Information Center (CIC), located within the Pinellas County Public Safety Complex at 10750 Ulmerton Road, Largo, FL.

An email was sent on December 30 with details

Seminole Fire Rescue Open House Station 29

Saturday, April 25

Look for an emailed event form for details

2025 **NOT** Needing to REMEMBER

12 Days of a CERT Disaster !

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| On the 1st day my EOC assigned me ... | 1 great CERT Team to lead (IC) |
| On the 2nd day my EOC gave to me ... | 2 manuals on Successful SAR |
| On the 3rd day my EOC assigned to me ... | 3 Drones for "Eye in the Sky" flying |
| On the 4th day my EOC gave to me ... | 4 FFRehab assignments |
| On the 5th day my EOC gave to me ... | 5 SAR assignments |
| On the 6th day my EOC assigned to me ... | 6 webEOC CALLS to Dispatch ... |
| On the 7th day my EOC gave to me ... | 7 "shift change" CERT members |
| On the 8th day my EOC gave to me ... | 8 Triangle Bandage ASSIGNMENTS |
| On the 9th day my EOC assigned to me ... | 9 POWER OUT for reporting |
| On the 10th day my EOC gave to me ... | 10 POD ice & water locations |
| On the 11th day EOC gave to me ... | 11 OKAY to RETURN checkups |
| On the 12th day my EOC assigned to me ... | 12 Special Needs EVAC Returns |