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## **CITY OF BRANSON**

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# **News Release**

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## **Branson firefighters again offering CERT classes**

Knowing what to do in the aftermath of a local disaster before emergency personnel arrive can greatly reduce injuries and save lives. And the key to providing this additional resource of emergency response is through a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).

CERT is a federally developed program that focuses on the opportunity to train citizens from the community how to survive themselves and how to perform essential life-saving functions in their neighborhoods while waiting for professional responders to arrive following a disaster.



**Citizens transport the injured from a simulated disaster scene during a CERT class**

Starting August 31, the Branson Fire Department will conduct another CERT class for Branson residents. The program focuses on teaching skills related to disaster responses such as fire and rescue operations, light search and rescue, disaster psychology, team organization and most importantly, disaster preparedness.

The class also teaches people how to take care of themselves for up to 72 hours after a disaster.

“Our department established this program to fit this very need, and we have certified instructors for the class,” said Fire Chief Carl Sparks. “We want community neighborhoods to be self-sufficient during an emergency situation until medically trained personnel can arrive.”

Captain Paul Harkins, who serves as one of the instructors, said citizens learn how to use resources from their homes to make a positive impact on a disaster response.

“We also provide CERT students with a backpack full of emergency supplies such as a helmet and reflective safety vest, flashlight and a first aid kit if they stay on as a member of the Branson team ” said Harkins.

The course, beginning August 31, will be held on Tuesday evenings for eight weeks and includes classroom time plus practical skills in each of the focus topics. The entire program is offered free to the participants with costs covered through a federal grant.

Since the inception of the CERT program five years ago, the fire department has conducted nine classes with more than 120 citizens certified.

Citizens interested in the CERT class can sign up on line at [www.bransonmo.gov](http://www.bransonmo.gov) and click on the fire department link or by calling the Branson Fire Department at 417-243-2790.