

making a difference

The Manhattan Beach Community Emergency Response Team

Wayne Powell



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We've had a wake-up (shakeup) call with a series of small local earthquakes, one recently felt by many residents in the Hill Section. These were small quakes, and far from the "big one" that seismic experts are predicting (or as they warn, it's not a matter of if, but when it's going to occur). Therefore, disaster preparedness and response are essential (as an Eagle Scout, I'll never forget the Boy Scout motto, "Be Prepared").

The Manhattan Beach Community Emergency Response Team Association is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization founded in 2006 to enhance disaster preparedness and emergency response. The program trains residents to protect themselves, their family, friends, neighbors and their neighborhood in a community emergency such as an earthquake, explosion, fire, flood, tsunami, or act of terrorism. The motto of the MBCERT program is

"Citizens Helping Neighbors and Our City." The training is also valuable for home and work emergencies such as accidents, heart attacks and stroke, as well as injury auto collisions.

A major disaster such as a severe earthquake can overwhelm emergency services (fire, police, and public works). It may be several hours or even days after a catastrophic event before emergency personnel arrive. MBCERT members are trained and ready to be first responders until city emergency resources arrive. There are currently 420 graduates of the MBCERT program (60 from the Hill Section, including Mayor David Lesser and School Board Member Ellen Rosenberg) and 20 are members of the MBCERT Emergency Medical Response call-out team (2 from the Hill Section) who have advanced EMR-certified medical training. MBCERT members also assist our Fire and Police Departments, provide information at several city events, and teach first aid and CPR/AED classes.

Just two days after graduating from the first MBCERT class, a resident was a first responder at a Manhattan Beach apartment fire. He called 911, evacuated occupants, assisted an elderly resident and helped a neighbor trying to extinguish the fire with a garden hose. I've used my MBCERT training upon arriving at the



scene of a serious auto accident and also to aid an elderly woman who had fallen (while I was emceeing a Manhattan Beach Concert in the Park).

Manhattan Beach firefighter/paramedics and MBCERT instructors teach the course. Topics covered include disaster preparedness, terrorism information, emergency medical care, fire suppression, and light search and rescue. The final class includes a disaster simulation complete with trapped "victims" with simulated injuries. During the drill, the students assess a disaster scene, search for and rescue victims safely, manage hazardous utilities, extinguish small fires, perform triage head-to-toe evaluations, treat the three medical killers (by opening airways, controlling bleeding and treating for shock) and provide other medical aid.

The course is free (\$60 deposit, refunded upon completion) and attendees receive a backpack with emergency supplies and an official MBCERT hard hat, vest, certificate and photo identification card. Graduates become members of the Manhattan Beach CERT Association, which conducts periodic, advanced training and has emergency vehicles, equipment and supplies. The annual general meeting is July 21st from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Joslyn Center.

For more information on the MBCERT program, please visit the MBCERT Association website at www.mbcerta.org or email info@mbcerta.org.

Editor's Note: Wayne Powell is a former two-term Manhattan Beach Mayor and City Councilmember and a former three-term Los Angeles County Beach Commissioner/Chair. He's a MBCERT founding Board member, Neighborhood Watch Block Captain, serves on the Board of Directors of several local non-profit organizations, and is the host/producer of 'Powell to the People' airing nationally on the Healthy Life radio network.

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