

## City of Alexandria, Virginia

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## MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 18, 2003

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: SUBMISSION OF A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FOR THE FIRE DEPARTMENT TO SET UP A COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM PROGRAM

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**ISSUE:** City Council consideration of a grant application, totaling \$56,839, to the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) for the Alexandria Fire Department to set up a Community Emergency Response Team Program.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council:

- (1) approve this grant application to VDEM, totaling \$56,839, which would allow the Fire Department to set up a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT); and
- (2) authorize the City Manager to execute all documents that may be required.

**BACKGROUND:** Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, a renewed spirit of service, citizenship, and responsibility has emerged. President George W. Bush launched the USA Freedom Corps initiative in order to inspire Americans to find ways to serve their community or their country. Virginia Governor Mark Warner subsequently set up the Citizen Corps Program to implement this initiative in Virginia. As a component of the USA Freedom Corps, this Community Emergency Response Team Grant (CERT) is a local citizen-corps effort to create opportunities for individuals to volunteer and help their communities prepare for and respond to emergencies. It brings together local leaders, citizen volunteers, and the network of first responders who answer emergency calls. The goal is to have teams of citizens participate in making their communities safer, stronger, and better prepared for preventing and handling emergencies and disasters.

**DISCUSSION:** Coordinating the training and utilization of CERT teams will be the responsibility of the local Citizen Corps Council. This is currently the responsibility of the Alexandria Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC). We expect to expand citizen participation in this program as part of this grant.

Over the next eight months, Alexandria plans to establish a CERT Program that will:

- present facts to citizens about what to expect following a major disaster in terms of immediate services;
- give the message about citizens' responsibility for their own family preparedness;
- train citizens in needed lifesaving skills, emphasizing decision-making skills, rescuer safety, and doing the greatest good for the greatest number; and
- organize teams as an extension of first responder services offering immediate help to victims until professional help arrives.

Over the last year, Police Sergeant Joseph Watson and Fire Captain John North have conducted informational sessions about weapons of mass destruction and citizen response to hazardous incidents with over 20 citizen and business groups. This type of public information effort is an example of the program we will be expanding in the community. Under the grant, the Fire Department's Citizen Fire Academy, a three-day Public Education program, will be expanded to a five-day program that will include CERT. During the first grant-funded year, there will be two classes of 30 students each. After the completion of each class, citizens will be offered the opportunity to work with other City agencies, community groups, and businesses.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** There is no match requirement for this grant. Quarterly reports are required at the end of June and the end of September 2003, and a final report is due on December 3, 2003.

The Fire Department has submitted this grant to the State in order to meet the deadline of March 7, 2003, with the understanding the subsequent City Council authorization would be required to accept this grant award.

**ATTACHMENTS:** None. This grant application may be reviewed in the Office of Management and Budget, Room 3600, City Hall, during normal business hours.

**STAFF:**

Michele Evans, Assistant City Manager

James T. Gower, Interim Fire Chief

Arthur Dahlberg, Code Enforcement Director, Alexandria Fire Department

Robert Lockett, Chief Deputy Fire Marshal

Michael Conner, Chief Fire Marshal

Virginia Lester, Fiscal Officer, Alexandria Fire Department