

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: DECEMBER 3, 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 ESTABLISH COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS IN ALEXANDRIA'S HISPANIC COMMUNITY

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**ISSUE:** City Council consideration of a grant application, totaling \$85,653, to the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) for the Fire Department to establish new Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) in the Hispanic community.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council:

- (1) Approve this grant application to VDEM, totaling \$85,653, which would allow the Fire Department to establish Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) in the City's Hispanic community; 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. In an effort to capture this spirit, President George W. Bush launched the USA Freedom Corps initiative in order to inspire Americans to find ways to serve their community and/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 CERT grant is a local citizen-corps effort to create opportunities for individuals to volunteer and help their communities prepare for and respond to emergencies.

**DISCUSSION:** As an expansion of Alexandria's CERT program initiated by the Fire Department in 2003, this grant program will provide an opportunity for Alexandria's Hispanic residents to participate in making the community safer, stronger, and better prepared to prevent and handle emergencies and disasters. During 2004, these grant monies will provide funding to establish bilingual training that will:

- Teach residents what to expect following a major disaster in terms of immediate services;
- Explain residents' responsibilities for mitigation and preparedness;
- Train participants to conduct 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 to offer immediate help to victims until professional services arrive.

After completing the training CERT participants will be offered the opportunity to work with other City agencies, community groups, and businesses. Encouraging Hispanic residents to provide community outreach – in the areas they live or work – is an important component of the CERT Program. These CERT volunteers could play a very important role within the City during an emergency or a crisis. We expect to set up three CERT teams that include those who participate in this training as well as those who were in the first CERT group of about 10 members.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** There is no match requirement for this competitive grant, which totals \$85,653. Quarterly reports are required. It should be noted that there are no monies available in the City budget to continue CERT activities once the grant funds are expended.

The Fire Department has submitted this grant to the State in order to meet the deadline of November 21, 2003, with the understanding that 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:**

Gary Mesaris, Fire Chief

Virginia Lester, Fiscal Officer, Alexandria Fire Department

Richard Sisler, Deputy Fire Marshal, Alexandria Fire Department

Michael Dunlap, Jr., Lieutenant, Alexandria Fire Department