SPANISH COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM TRAINING

Leading Community Risk Reduction

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Appendices Not Included. Please visit the Learning Resource Center on the Web at http://www.lrc.dhs.gov/ to learn how to obtain this report in its entirety through Interlibrary Loan.
Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another. I have used the Fifth Edition of the American Psychological Association’s *Publication Manual* as the reporting standard and I entered into the Executive Fire Officer program prior to September of 2003.

Signed _____________________________
Abstract

Hillsboro, Oregon has a large (19%) Hispanic population, many who primarily speak Spanish. Hillsboro Fire Department has conducted Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training for 7 years but has not trained Spanish-speaking residents.

This research seeks the information necessary to successfully assess CERT training in Spanish.

Using descriptive research, these questions were addressed:

1. What Spanish CERT curriculum is available?
2. What issues influence conducting CERT training in Spanish?
3. What resources may provide assistance when establishing Spanish CERT training?

Research included; Internet searches, interviews, literary review, and a survey. This research found existing Spanish CERT programs, identified cultural barriers to training, and community resources to utilize.

HFD should conduct CERT training in Spanish to enhance community safety.
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Introduction

The City of Hillsboro has a population of 70,186 (US Bureau of the Census, 2000). Nearly 19% of its residents have either a Hispanic or Latino background. The Hillsboro Fire Department (HFD) has trained over 550 residents as Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members. The problem is this training has not reached Spanish-speaking residents or neighborhoods. Despite 7 years of training CERT members, no training has been done in Spanish. In the event of a disaster, people will respond to others in need regardless of prior training. However, the CERT program teaches residents to do so effectively and efficiently without placing themselves in unnecessary danger. Without this training, the Spanish-speaking residents of Hillsboro will be poorly equipped to respond to a disaster as compared to their CERT trained neighbors.

The purpose of this research is to identify methods and resources that will facilitate conducting CERT training for Spanish-speaking residents in Hillsboro. Using descriptive research, these questions were addressed:

1. What CERT curriculum is currently available in Spanish?
2. What issues may influence HFD conducting CERT training in Spanish?
3. What resources should be targeted to provide assistance when establishing CERT training for the Hispanic residents of Hillsboro?

Background and Significance

Since January of 1997, HFD has sponsored and conducted the CERT program in Hillsboro. Over the last 7 years, more than 550 concerned citizens have become certified by successfully completing the 8 week, 24 hour training course. CERT training is free to
anyone who lives or works in Hillsboro. Targeted recruitment has focused on local businesses, Hillsboro’s high schools, neighborhood associations, churches, Explorer Scouts, and government offices. According to Sharon Kennedy, Hillsboro’s CERT Program Coordinator and the City of Hillsboro’s Emergency Manager, “The best source of generating interest has come from advertisement done on a local billboard” (personal communication, August 26, 2004). Hillsboro Fire Department conducts CERT training three to four times a year. Of the more than 550 citizens trained, none identified Spanish as their primary language. In fact, the Spanish-speaking residents of Hillsboro have not been specifically targeted for involvement in this program.

The significance of not having trained Spanish-speaking CERT members is highlighted in the following statistics. According to Portland State University’s (2003, p. 10) Population Research Center, Hillsboro was the fifth largest city in Oregon in 2003 with an estimated population of 79,340. Experiencing steady growth over the last 13 years, Hillsboro’s overall population increased 87%. Between 1990 and 2000, Hillsboro’s Hispanic population increased 215% from 4,203 to 13,262 representing 18.9% of the city’s population (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990, 2000). The U.S. Bureau of the Census (2000) reported 6783 Spanish-speaking residents over the age of five speak English “less than very well” (p. 2). It is anticipated that overall growth will continue as will the proportionally higher Hispanic growth rate. HFD must respond to this community growth pattern.

To date, all CERT members have been recruited from organizations that use English as their primary language. There has not been a concerted effort to reach the Hispanic community of Hillsboro by the CERT program. HFD has provided fire
prevention and safety training to the Hispanic community primarily through fire prevention pamphlets translated into Spanish by State or Federal agencies. Previous research was conducted on how to enhance firefighters’ ability to communicate with Spanish-speaking customers. Through this earlier research, contacts were established within the Hispanic community.

The 2004 Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program offered HFD the opportunity to address the lack of fire prevention training and outreach to the Hispanic community. HFD’s Public Education Officer, Connie King, wrote a grant proposal that has been awarded $30,000 for an Outreach Program Coordinators position. The grant application states:

The coordinator of this program must be bilingual with the capability to recruit, train and maintain/manage a corps of bilingual volunteers. While many materials have already been developed and utilized by the Department in existing programs, this proposed program needs target-specific materials, and training materials for the volunteers. In addition, materials such as pictographic posters and other collateral materials to support the outreach will need input and direction from the bilingual coordinator; these materials need to be culturally and literacy appropriate. (King, 2004, p. 4)

This application further describes the program in which, “The primary target group is Latino tenants, a group who all too frequently find themselves stuck in homes in this country without the knowledge, skills or resources to create and maintain a fire safe home” (King, 2004, p. 1). CERT training, tailored for the Hispanic community, would directly address this lack of knowledge, skills, and resources.
In the future, HFD will recruit a program coordinator and establish clear expectations of this position. CERT training will be one facet of the ongoing fire prevention and safety training HFD will offer its citizens who speak Spanish as their primary language.

This research project links directly to the United States Fire Administration’s (2004) 5 year operational objectives as it seeks to enhance Hillsboro’s ability, “To appropriately respond in a timely manner to emergent issues” (p. 1). The City of Hillsboro’s (n.d.) web page states:

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program motto is “Neighbors Helping Neighbors.” Taught by Hillsboro firefighters, CERT teaches the disaster skills you may need in the event of a major earthquake. Our “ideal” CERT member is anyone who desires to learn the skills to assist themselves and their neighbors during a disaster. (para. 3)

The Hillsboro CERT (n.d.) web page talks about the program and in its introductory statement says:

The City of Hillsboro provides you with quality emergency fire and medical services. In the wake of a disaster, however, they may be unavailable due to debris and road damage, plus an overwhelming need for emergency response in all areas of the city. Some basic training in disaster survival and rescue skills would improve your ability to survive until assistance arrives. (para. 2)

Bringing training to a group that represents the nearly 19% of Hillsboro’s residents will facilitate timely and appropriate responses to emergencies. A trained neighbor helping a neighbor in need, when the standard emergency system is unable to
meet the needs of the community, is the basis of CERT. Through greater awareness of the community’s emergency response system, education of the Hispanic population will also serve to address the United States Fire Administration’s objectives of reducing loss of life from fire. Arguably, enhancing the ability of the Hispanic community to aid itself in the event of a disaster increases the probability of a quicker rescue, better medical care, and increased awareness of hazards, all of which will lead to a reduction in the loss of life.

The National Fire Academy’s (NFA) Leading Community Risk Reduction course, Unit Four, describes potential risk reduction strategies. This research directly relates to the strategy of increasing the emergency response capability of a community.

“Emergency response interventions are the use of emergency responders, e.g., fire, law enforcement, etc., to mitigate the risk. There are risks that can be mitigated only by adding new emergency capability or enhancing current emergency response capability” (National Fire Academy Student Manual, 2003, p. 4-43). A disaster will certainly overwhelm HFD’s resources. The citizens of Hillsboro will become emergency responders for themselves, their co-workers and their neighbors. The inclusion of the Hispanic community will not only increase the overall capabilities of our existing CERT program but also provide new resources to a growing segment of the community.

Literature Review

The literary investigation for this research project sought to discover what others have communicated regarding these questions. What CERT programs are available in Spanish, what issues influence conducting CERT training in Spanish versus English, and what resources are of benefit when establishing a Spanish CERT program? To answer
these questions, existing Spanish CERT curriculum was identified, obstacles or area of concerns were acknowledged, and resources identified.

According to the Emergency Management Institute (2004), Florida has the highest number of CERT programs at 130 followed by California with 124 programs. Kaiser Permanente (2000) produced a publication titled, *A Provider’s Handbook on Culturally Competent Care*. In this publication, Kaiser provided statistics which partially explain why there are a higher number of CERT programs in California and Florida taught in Spanish. They stated:

In 2000, 76.8% of Latinos resided in seven states with Latino populations of one million or more: California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, Arizona, and New Jersey. The largest concentrations are in four cities: New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago and San Antonio. In Southern California, nearly 25% of Kaiser Permanente’s members are Latino. (p. 3)

According to CERT Los Angeles (2004), California is where CERT was first established. Furthermore, the web page goes on to explain the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) first involvement in CERT:

The City of Los Angeles Fire Department developed a pilot program to train a group of leaders in a neighborhood watch organization. A concept developed involving multi-functional volunteer response teams with the ability to perform basic fire suppression, light search and rescue, and first aid. This first team of 30 people completed training in early 1986 and proved that the concept was viable through various drills, demonstrations, and exercises. . . . On October 1, 1987, the Whittier Narrows earthquake vividly underscored the threat of an area-wide major
disaster, and demonstrated the need to expedite the training of civilians to prepare for earthquakes and other emergencies.

Following the Whittier Narrows earthquake, the City of Los Angeles took an aggressive role in protecting the citizens of Los Angeles by creating the Disaster Preparedness Division (now the Disaster Preparedness Unit) within the Los Angeles Fire Department. . . . 1993, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) decided to make the concept and program available to communities nationwide. The Emergency Management Institute (EMI), in cooperation with the LAFD, expanded the CERT materials to make them applicable to all hazards. (What is CERT, How did CERT start, para. 4)

The Emergency Management Institute (2004) recognizes 1387 CERT programs as of April 19, 2004. Of these, 1265 program coordinators received surveys requesting information about their organization and conducting CERT training in Spanish.

Bill D'Agostino (2004) wrote about the City of Mountain View Spanish CERT program:

The City of Mountain View, California, started a Spanish CERT program in 2002: After September 11, enrollment in the fire department's emergency response class -- known as the Community Emergency Response Team, or CERT -- predictably ballooned to accommodate residents' interest in how to prepare for a disaster. Now, the city is opening up the classes for Spanish speakers to meet the demands of the Hispanic community. . . . More than 30 residents signed up for the new course and there is already a waiting list for the next Spanish language course. (para. 1)
The Orlando Citizen Corps Council, formed in 2002, has reached out to the Hispanic community and conducted Spanish CERT training:

The official Council, inaugurated in June 2002, included members representing organizations ranging from the Hispanic Christian Church Association of Central Florida to the Asian-American Chamber of Commerce. . . . Since its formation, the Orlando Citizen Corps Council has consistently demonstrated tangible results. These include . . . developed specialized Hispanic CERT and Police Academy programs to reach out to the Hispanic communities. (Citizens Corp, n.d., Council background, para. 2)

The actual training is conducted by the City of Orlando’s Fire Department and is headed by Commander Vickie Robles. Robles’ organization was not a respondent to the survey (Appendix A) but she stated they have trained 131 Spanish-speaking students using curriculum based off of FEMA’s manual with modifications to address community needs, culture, and income levels of the students (personal communication, September 13, 2004).

In *Homeland Protection Professional*, Borden and Lee (2002) wrote about CERT training and its value to a community. They stated that, “The City of Los Angeles has trained over 40,000 citizens in this program” (p.33). They also addressed the importance of training the community as demonstrated by events following a devastating earthquake that hit Mexico City in 1985. They wrote:

Before the disaster, Mexico City had no training program for citizens. However, large groups of volunteers spontaneously organized and performed light search and rescue operations. Although volunteers are credited with more than 800
successful rescues, unfortunately, more than 100 of these untrained individuals
died during the 15-day rescue operation. (p.31)

The CERT Los Angeles (2004) program uses the FEMA Spanish CERT
curriculum. This curriculum is available for download on their web page. This site states,“10/9/2003 – FEMA released the Spanish version of the participant manual and the
visuals” (Manuals, p. 1). This material may also be downloaded from FEMA’s web page.
CERT LA offers the program in a Portable Document Format (PDF) whereas FEMA
offers it in a Word format.

Conducting a CERT training program in Spanish brings to the forefront issues
that may influence the decision to conduct CERT training in Spanish versus English. A
study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (Baker, Parker,
Williams, Coates, & Pitkin, 1996) addressed cultural and educational issues writing,
“Communication is further impaired by differences in culture, communication styles, and
low educational attainment (p.1). Additionally, they concluded that due to the high
prevalence of illiteracy, “attempts to overcome language barriers by providing written
instructions will not be successful” (p. 2).

Another barrier that exists is cultural differences within the Hispanic community
itself. There are different dialects spoken and practices observed depending on the
country or region of origin (Oregon School Boards Association, 2001, p. 8).

Two interviews directly related to this research project were conducted to identify
methods of improving communications between HFD and the Hispanic community of
Hillsboro. First, was an interview with Adele Hughes, Business Development Director
with the Greater Hillsboro Area Chamber of Commerce. She addressed concerns
regarding the level of education and the literacy level of the non-English speaking population of Hillsboro. She stressed the need for verbal, versus written communication (personal conversation, Adele Hughes, July 2, 2003).

A second interview was conducted with Francisco Trujillo who is a career apparatus operator at Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue. Trujillo is Hispanic and is very active with outreach to the Hispanic community. Trujillo stated, “When you understand the culture, you can communicate better” (personal conversation, Francisco Trujillo, July 31, 2003). Trujillo pointed out several examples of cultural issues that may inhibit communication. He believes the literacy rate of Mexican born, non-English speaking residents in Washington County is low. He bases this assumption on his belief that a typical male only completes second grade while the typical female might have an eighth grade education. Even though females usually obtain a higher educational level, he stressed the strong male dominance within the Hispanic culture. This needs to be taken into consideration when addressing Hispanic men and women. Another cultural issue is the need for young family members to earn an income in order to financially help support the family. Finally, he expressed the strong distrust of public servants held within the Hispanic community.

David R. Anderson (2004) is a writer for The Oregonian, the major newspaper in Oregon. Anderson wrote an article describing the rapid growth of the Hispanic population in this area focusing on a particular elementary school. Vose Elementary School in Beaverton, Oregon is approximately five miles from Hillsboro. Anderson wrote the following:
In seven years, . . . the school has gone from 12% minority enrollment to 62 percent. The percentage of English speaking students has decreased from 85 percent to 40 percent.

Adding to the challenge of educating those children, Vose Principal John Whithers said, is that Latino mothers have an average education level of two to four years in elementary school. And most have never been inside a US classroom. (p. B8)

Another article speaks to the high school drop out rate of Hispanic students. According to a report compiled by Stephanie Williams (2001):

Hispanics have had much lower high school completion rates than Blacks and Whites since the early 1970s. The rate for Hispanics (age 18 to 24) in 1998 was 63 percent, compared with 81 percent for blacks and 90 percent for whites. (p.1)

Williams also addressed the financial issue when she reported on the poverty level of Hispanic children. Williams stated, “The percentage of Hispanic children at or below 100 percent of the poverty line declined between 1996 and 1999. Hispanic and black children, however are still twice as likely as white children to live in poverty” (p. 4).

The Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal (2002) received a grant from the National Safe Kids Campaign and Kaiser Permanente. The mission statement was, “To reduce the number of fires and related injury in Oregon’s Spanish-speaking population by creating a culturally specific fire/burn prevention program in a local Hispanic community” (p.3). Their recommendation included the following:

Based on partner recommendations as well as talking to other programs targeting Spanish speaking populations, such as the Marion County Solid Waste Latino
Public Education program, the most effective intervention must address literacy issues of the population, which means intervention materials must not require the target audience to read. (p. 6)

Kaiser Permanente (2000) also speaks to the need to address language barriers when conducting training within the Hispanic community. They stated, “About 60% of Latino adults speak Spanish at home. Twenty percent are bilingual and 20% are English dominant. Women are more likely to be Spanish dominant than men” (p.5).

Randall Egsegian (2003) conducted research to determine fire prevention awareness and educational levels in Hispanic cross cultural communities. With regards to educational levels, Egsegian wrote, “The results indicated that the average Hispanic in the study was not a high school graduate” (p. 1).

There are many cultural differences to address. Tommie Styons (2003) wrote, “There is a need for Latino-specific cultural diversity training for all members of the department to develop a general understanding of the community and emphasize the importance [of] reaching this often overlooked and underserved population” (p. 2). Styons also identified the issue of distrust and fear of authorities. He stated there was, “A significant problem during the recent winter storms when Latinos were hesitant to go to shelters due to a fear of authority and their legal status” (p. 29).

In the final report from the Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal’s (2002) project on creating a model fire prevention program within a local Hispanic community, cultural issues with regards to gender were addressed. The report cited, “Interviewers noticed that fire prevention seemed to be a gender issue, and the woman’s responsibility. Many
couples were interviewed, in these cases interviewers noticed the male deferred to the female. Men did not seem knowledgeable on the issue” (p. 13).

Linda Nilsen-Solares, program coordinator for Washington County Health and Human Services, conducted a survey of individuals representing the major organizations that serve the Hispanic population in Washington County, Oregon where Hillsboro is located. The purpose of the survey was to question emergency preparedness among Spanish speakers. The major conclusions that Nilsen-Solares (2003) presented in her report were:

1. Monolingual Spanish speakers probably have less awareness and attach less importance to emergency preparedness than English speakers. They tend to be poor and are more preoccupied with the daily “emergencies” of survival.

2. Monolingual Spanish speakers would be more likely to suffer in an emergency situation due to lack of preparation and lack of consistent, reliable information provided to them from the media.

3. Making an extra effort to reach out to monolingual Spanish speakers (despite their lack of interest and other potential barriers) is very important because they should have access to the same information as the community at large and they are more likely to suffer in an emergency situation.

4. Protection of family is the number one motivation for this population to potentially prepare for emergencies.

5. Education should be provided in person or through mass media, especially the radio.
6. Schools, churches and radio are all good places to get out information - cable access TV is also OK.

7. The biggest barrier to people following through on implementing preparation is financial - this is connected to the time it takes to work enough to survive and the belief that either bad things will not happen or that even if they do there is nothing that can be done. (p. 1)

A Portrait of Poverty in Oregon is a five part report written for the University of Oregon Extension Service that delves into the issue of poverty. In regards to the Hispanic community the following was written:

About 200,000 Oregonians are Hispanic, according to 1998 population estimates by the Oregon Department of Employment. About 27%, or 54,000 of them, live below the poverty level.

Almost a third of Oregon's Hispanics have no health insurance. They earn about half the average state per capita income. This forces many young Hispanics to drop out of school to find jobs to help support their families.

“With a great supply of low-paying jobs in the state, what would you do if you were poor?” asked Maria Elena Campisteguy-Hawkins, the executive director of the Oregon Council for Hispanic Advancement. “Work or go hungry? Sometimes it takes both parents and kids working to support a family in Oregon at low wages.” (Dailey, Novak, Rost, & Savonen, n.d., Hispanic section, para. 2)

HFD’s neighboring fire department, Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue (TVFR) recently began teaching cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) classes in Spanish. Captain Milton Villegas is coordinating the program and notes cultural issues that need to be
addressed. *The Oregonian* newspaper, published a story about TVFR’s Spanish CPR class, Kate Taylor (2004) quoted Villegas as saying:

“What often happens is (Latinos) don’t call 9-1-1, and they try to deal with a fire or another emergency by themselves. They’re afraid, very often, of authority figures, and they’re afraid that if people come, they will have to pay, and many don’t have money. Often they don’t think anyone on the other end can speak Spanish.” (p. D9)

Villegas was also quoted by Taylor regarding why Spanish-speaking people don’t learn CPR, “There’s the feeling out there that it’s something for experts to do” (p. D9).

Finally, the literature review also sought to identify resources that should be targeted to provide assistance when establishing a Spanish CERT program. Specifically the areas of development of course material, recruitment of students, and the actual conduction of the course were researched.

The Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal (2002) utilized multiple resources researching their project and aiding them in the design of the program. These resources were, local schools, housing agencies, head start programs, churches, community colleges, Oregon Health Sciences University, State of Oregon Multi-Cultural Health agency, Hispanic volunteers from the community, Oregon Commission of Hispanic Affairs, and local radio and television media.

Captain Kenneth Kemp (personal communication July 20, 2004) of the Los Angeles Fire Department’s Disaster Preparedness Unit said they were looking into a system produced by Williams Sound Corporation to aid in conducting training in any language. The system allows translators to simultaneously broadcast what an instructor is
saying to students wearing headphones. One advantage of the system is it will allow up to four different languages to be broadcast at the same time thus enabling them to conduct CERT training in multiple languages simultaneously. Captain Kemp also suggested, that due to financial constraints and cultural issues, childcare should be provided for children of the students.

Bill O’Neil (1996) wrote about the problems facing rural fire departments in Oregon’s Willamette Valley when providing public education to the immigrant population. Two examples of utilizing outside resources are illustrated. Marion County Fire District One in Oregon, “Established a great working relationship with Chemeketa Community College’s English as a Second Language Department, which does free translation and checks their material for cultural correctness” (p. 63). Polk County Fire District One used monthly utility bills as a delivery method to reach multicultural, multilingual residents (p. 66).

Scott A. Gutschick (2002), an emergency manager in Palm Beach County, Florida, discussed lessons learned when developing a foreign language course. In the article, Gutshick offered this advice:

Most importantly, the curriculum must be flexible to allow the instructor to modify the lesson plans to meet the needs and interest of the students. Along with this recommendation is the need to encourage input from students before and during the course, so that the curriculum meets their specific needs. In addition, the instructor must be given the latitude to proceed at a pace appropriate for the participants as opposed to keeping to a rigid curriculum schedule. (p. 8)
Review of current literature revealed that CERT training has been readily available in Spanish since 2003. FEMA made the program accessible via its web site. Indeed there are organizations in both California and Florida that routinely conduct CERT training in Spanish.

Challenges or issues to address when planning to conduct CERT training in Spanish can be summarized in three primary areas. These are financial concerns of the Hispanic student, educational levels, and cultural differences.

The literature review noted many organizations, outside of HFD, as possible resources to aid in the establishment of a Spanish CERT program. These organizations would be targeted for development of the curriculum, recruitment in the Hispanic community and assistance with conducting the class. Community actions groups, churches, local schools, county agencies, and community colleges were noted to be frequently used in establishing new programs that address the needs of the Hispanic community.

Procedures

The procedures used to conduct this research project included a literary review, personal interviews, and a survey of CERT program coordinators nationwide.

The literature review employed several formats. The Google search engine was utilized for on-line investigation of many related topics. The following is a partial list of search topics; (a) community emergency response team, Spanish, (b) Spanish CERT, (c) FEMA Spanish CERT, and (d) emergency preparedness, Hispanic. The searches on Google were limited and this researcher found that utilizing links to other web pages located on CERT Los Angeles and FEMA CERT were the most effective. Each search
revealed a variety of sources that were evaluated for use as references in this project or were simply added in the development of the project. The Internet was also used to obtain specific information such as census data and as follow up to information provided from the survey. The literature review also included a search of articles and applied research projects, found at the National Fire Academy’s library, containing information relating to community emergency response teams, Spanish, Latino, Hispanic, public education, and emergency preparedness.

Personal interviews were conducted with a variety of individuals with the intent of gaining information from several different perspectives. The interviews were with (a) local Hispanic residents of Hillsboro, (b) CERT program coordinators, (c) chamber of commerce personnel responsible for developing Hispanic small businesses in Hillsboro, (d) a senior program educator for Washington County Health and Human Services, (e) bilingual firefighters, and (f) local public education officers. These interviews focused on questions regarding available Spanish CERT programs, existing cultural issues to consider, and ideas regarding conducting a Spanish CERT training program, including recruitment, instructors, and curriculum modifications. Not all interviews were referenced in this project but each added a unique perspective and enhanced understanding of the issues at hand. The interviews also produced ideas and partnerships that HFD may pursue in the future.

Finally, the research included a survey (Appendix A) of CERT program coordinators nationwide. This survey was administered by a company named Advanced Survey.Com, which allows the researcher to create a survey using their own logos, then email a chosen list of recipients the hyperlink to the survey. The recipients included 1265
CERT program coordinators. This list (Appendix B) was provided by CERT Los Angeles. Coordinator information is also available on the CERT Los Angeles web page but is not presented in a list format. Questions were designed to determine the demographics of the organizations responding to the survey, their experience with CERT training in both English and Spanish, and their recommendations for conducting Spanish CERT training.

Statistical analysis

The results of the survey (Appendix A) were analyzed and reported in the results section of this paper. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate and interpret the data generated from the survey. The raw numbers, found in the results section of this research, are reported in Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Limitations and assumptions

The purpose of this research was not to evaluate the value of CERT training to a community. The base assumption of this project was that CERT training by HFD provides valuable education to the residents of Hillsboro. It was assumed that all CERT program coordinators who received the survey represented their organizations truthfully and without prejudice. It was also assumed that the survey recipients were sufficiently knowledgeable of their organization’s demographics to accurately respond to the survey. Another assumption was that those individuals who responded to the survey, on average, closely reflect all CERT organizations.

Although the survey was sent to 1265 CERT program coordinators (Appendix B), 117 emails were returned as undeliverable and only 147 (13%) organizations responded to one or more survey questions. Furthermore, the survey was sent to CERT program
coordinators nationwide and could have been targeted to organizations that have similar demographics to that of Hillsboro. Respondents reported varying percentages of Spanish-speaking populations, from less than 1% to more than 25%, and a population base from less than 10,000 to more than 100,000. These two examples of disparities in respondent demographics demonstrate how resources and needs could be very different between organizations. This researcher was not able to develop a method to determine demographics within CERT programs prior to the survey being distributed. Another limitation of the survey was all questions required an answer and the selections did not allow for a null answer. The final limitation noted was not all respondents completed the text portion of the survey, or answered all questions, this lead to incomplete surveys and unanswered questions.

**Definitions**

Barrier – “Any obstruction; what hinders approach, or progress; what stands in the way; an obstacle” (Thatcher, 1984, p. 66).


Disaster – Events such as hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, and fires, or other situations that cause human suffering or create human needs that those affected cannot alleviate without assistance (American Red Cross, 2004, para. 2).

Hispanic – someone with Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish origin.

Latino – synonymous with Hispanic for the purposes of this research.

Less than very well – a subjective standard based on the individuals own perception of their language ability and reported by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.
Resource – “Any source of aid or support” (Thatcher, 1984, p.716).

Results

The literary review revealed that FEMA offers a complete CERT curriculum in Spanish, which can be downloaded from two different sites on the Internet. FEMA’s CERT course provides the participant manual in a Word document format with the supporting visual aids in Power Point. CERT Los Angeles has the FEMA curriculum in Adobe Acrobat format with the visual aids in Power Point.

Results from the survey identified four options for developing or utilizing Spanish CERT curriculum. These options are; (a) use the readily available FEMA curriculum as downloaded, (b) use the FEMA curriculum as a basis and make modifications that are appropriate for the intended audience, (c) translate the current English curriculum to Spanish, or (d) teach the class in English and have interpreters translate during instruction. All four methods have been used by other CERT organizations. The two most common methods were found to be using FEMA’s curriculum unmodified or modifying FEMA’s course to fit the needs of the organization.

The three organizations, responding to the survey (Appendix A), that did not use the complete FEMA curriculum used the following methods. One organization did not use any participant manual and taught the class in Spanish using just the Power Point presentation. The two other organizations taught the class in English and translated it into Spanish during instruction. Of these two organizations, one used English participant manuals and the other used Spanish manuals.

It was interesting to note that one organization translated their English curriculum into Spanish, but in subsequent classes used FEMA’s Spanish curriculum. Another
organization developed curriculum that is organized differently than CERT but teaches much of the same material. The two manuals used for this program were translated into Spanish by the organization.

Several challenges to be expected when conducting CERT training in Spanish were identified from the literary review. The Spanish-speaking student is likely to have a lower educational level, which may affect literary ability. In addition there are different dialect spoken within the Hispanic community. Many of the Spanish-speaking students have a lower income and thus may not be able to afford childcare or to take time from work to attend class. Additionally, there are cultural issues to address like distrust or fear of authorities, and male dominated society.

The individuals interviewed cited lower educational and literacy levels as a significant challenge to consider. The fact that family members had to work several jobs to support the family was also a common theme. Finally, the issue of distrust of firefighters because they are perceived as authority figures was stated frequently.

Desirable resources for establishing a Spanish CERT program were identified for three purposes: course development or design, student recruitment, and conducting the training. This information was obtained from the literary review, interviews, and from antidotal comments made by survey respondents.

Course development and design targeted community colleges, local and state agencies and volunteers from the Hispanic community. Recruitment was done primarily through churches, Spanish newspapers and radio, and by personal contact. The resources used for actually conducting the course were bilingual Hispanic volunteers and bilingual
CERT members who were trained as instructors. Some agencies had bilingual staff available to provide instruction.

Interviews resulted in offers of assistance in conducting the training and identified several possible bilingual instructors.

Antidotal comments from survey respondents provided the following information. When conducting Spanish CERT training be aware of the cultural differences and be prepared to make allowances to meet the students’ needs. The course may be more effective if taught at a slower pace or intentionally spread out over more weeks. Use more visual and verbal instruction as opposed to written material due to literacy concerns. Finally, if possible make arrangements for childcare.

The survey (Appendix A) revealed that CERT training is being conducted by organizations of all sizes. The number of available programs has increased considerably over the last few years. The survey was sent to 1265 CERT program coordinators (Appendix B), 117 emails were returned undeliverable and 147 organizations responded to at least one or more questions. Thus, 13% of survey recipients responded. California had the most number of survey respondents at 39 with Florida second at 16 and Texas third at 11. These three states accounted for 45% of all responses. All six of the organizations, that have taught CERT training in Spanish to more than 50 students, are based in California. Two of these organizations have taught more than 100 Spanish-speaking students.

Figure 1 shows 111 organizations (78%) have been in existence for less than five years. This compares to 22 organizations (15%) that have been functioning for 6 to 10 years and 9 organizations (6%) that started more than 10 years ago.
Figure 1. Number of years that the survey respondent’s organization has been in existence (n=142).

Figure 2 compares the years an organization has been in existence to the population base they recruit from. This comparison reveals that the increase in the number of organizations over the last 5 years has been across all population bases. The least amount of growth was reported in organizations serving populations between 50,001 to 100,000, with the highest increase in the 10,001 to 50,000 population group.
Another demographic question considered was the estimated Hispanic population base of the respondent’s organization. Figure 3 illustrates that the majority of respondents estimated their Hispanic residents to be less than 15% of the total population served. However, 28 respondents (19%) reported greater than 25% Hispanic population.
Figure 3. The estimated percentage of Hispanic residents within the respondent’s population base (n=142).

The survey was also used to determine the estimated educational level of the respondent’s Spanish-speaking population. Figure 4 shows that 72 respondents (51%) estimated the educational level to be at a high school education. Only 10 respondents (7%) reported that their Spanish speaking population had a college level education.
Figure 4. The estimated educational level of the Spanish-speaking population within the respondents CERT recruitment area (n=140).

Of the 140 recipients that answered whether or not they have conducted CERT training in Spanish, only 13 organizations said yes. Of these 13 organizations, two used the FEMA Spanish curriculum unmodified, eight modified FEMA’s curriculum, and three responded that they used curriculum other than FEMA’s Spanish curriculum. These three organizations actually used portions of FEMA’s curriculum but not the complete program.

The survey asked respondents for suggestions when conducting CERT training in Spanish. The responses addressed challenges in recruitment and in conducting the training. Some of the specific challenges were based on cultural issues, in particular, the educational levels of students, timeliness of the students, and the need to provide childcare. Again, recruitment was targeted at churches, local stores, laundromats, and via
Spanish radio. The most common suggestion for obtaining instructors was to find interested bilingual CERT members and offer them additional training.

Discussion

The need to conduct CERT training is well illustrated by the tragic example of more than 100 untrained volunteers dying while attempting to rescue survivors of the 1985 earthquake that hit Mexico City (Borden & Lee, 2002). CERT training is relatively new and conducting CERT training in Spanish appears to be rare. The survey (Appendix A) revealed that 111 of 142 organizations have been in existence less than 5 years and only nine of them have been in existence more than 10 years. This shows the growth of CERT training in the United States but the survey indicated that CERT training in Spanish is still exceptionally rare. Only 13 of 140 organizations have conducted CERT training in Spanish. The majority of these 13 organizations are in California which, according to Kaiser Permanente (2000), is one of seven states with a population of more than one million Hispanics.

Hillsboro CERT (n.d.) teaches a series of classes designed to help citizens be better prepared to survive a disaster. The City of Hillsboro’s web page (n.d.) states, “Our ideal CERT member is anyone who desires to learn the skills to assist themselves and their neighbors during a disaster” (para. 3). With nearly 19% of Hillsboro’s population being Hispanic, the city needs to consider conducting CERT training in Spanish.

The reason for the small number of Spanish CERT programs may be in part due to the lack of available curriculum. Only recently, on October 9, 2003, did FEMA post the Spanish version of the CERT curriculum to their web page (CERT Los Angeles, 2004). FEMA’s web site and the CERT Los Angeles web site both enable individuals to
download the curriculum. The literary review did not find any other Spanish CERT curriculum and the survey validated this research. One CERT program translated their curriculum to Spanish but later switched to the FEMA version. All 13 organizations, conducting CERT training in Spanish, used FEMA’s curriculum either unmodified or with modifications to fit the needs of their community. Examples of modifications included, only using the visuals, adding in local pictures, deleting or adding hazards specific to their area, and changing wording to reflect proper dialect.

The City of Mountain View’s CERT program that D’Agostino (2004) wrote about also responded to the survey. They have trained between 51 and 100 Spanish-speaking students and use FEMA’s curriculum in an unmodified format.

Many challenges to conducting CERT training in Spanish were brought out of the literary review as well as interviews and survey results. Three main concerns identified were financial issues of the student, educational or literacy levels, and cultural differences.

Although CERT training is offered free of charge, eliminating other costs would be beneficial for student recruitment and retention. The interview with Trujillo (personal communication, July 31, 2003) pointed out that not only adults, but even young family members are often working to support the family. In personal communication with Robles (September 13, 2004), she was also stressed that Hispanic family members often worked two jobs making it difficult for them to commit to the class. These financial constraints pose a possible conflict with CERT training.

Williams (2001) adds to this assumption by stating that, “Hispanics…. Are twice a likely as white children to live in poverty” (p. 4) The report done on poverty in Oregon
by Dailey et al. (n.d.) reaffirms the low economic level of the Hispanic student and the potential conflict between CERT training and earning money to support the family. The interview with Ken Kemp (personal communication, July 20, 2004) and survey responses, both identified the provision of childcare as a method of reducing financial burdens and encouraging attendance.

Linda Nielsen-Solares (2003) stated,

The biggest barrier to people following through on implementing preparation is financial - this is connected to the time it takes to work enough to survive and the belief that either bad things will not happen or that even if they do there is nothing that can be done. (p. 1)

This restates the need to address the financial concerns of the student and addresses cultural issues as well. Nilsen-Solares found Spanish-speaking residents of Hillsboro less aware and less interested in emergency preparedness than English speaking residents.

The literature was consistent and extensive regarding educational issues. Baker et al. (1996) agreed with the Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal’s (2002) project and Hughes (personal communication, July 2, 2003) that literacy is a major issue any organization will need to consider when targeting the Hispanic community. Two survey respondents conducting Spanish CERT training didn’t even provide the student with Spanish participant manuals; they only taught the class verbally. Other writers address educational levels in general. The assumption being, if the educational level of the student was low than there would be more difficulty in teaching the CERT class. Trujillo (personal communication, July 31, 2003) estimated a level of second grade education for Hispanic men and eighth grade for women. This estimate is higher than a local
principal’s beliefs that, “Latino mothers have an average education level of two to four years in elementary school. And most have never been inside a US classroom” (Anderson, 2004, p. B8). Williams (2001) also reported only a 63% high school completion rate for Hispanics. Egsegian’s (2003) findings were also consistent with regards to educational levels. He found the average Hispanic in his study didn’t complete high school.

The survey (Appendix A) respondents estimated that only 51% of Spanish-speaking populations they serve have a high school level of education and 7% have a college level education. The consistency of the survey and literature review in terms of literacy and education reinforces the need for instruction to be more verbally focused and flexible in order to meet the students’ needs. The final challenge to address is cultural differences. As the Oregon School Boards Association (2001) pointed out, there are cultural differences such as dialects and observed cultural practices even within the Hispanic community. Most concerning, to this researcher, is the fear or mistrust of authorities within the Hispanic community. Styons (2003) reports this issue to be so strong that there was difficulty getting Hispanics to utilize emergency shelters during storms. In Taylor’s (2004) report it was suggested the fears might even inhibit calling 911 for an emergency. Trujillo (personal communication, July 31, 2003) agreed citing a common distrust of public servants. In the Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal’s (2002) project they suggest a change in uniforms to a friendly approachable style of dress with no badges or signs of authority. In free text, several survey (Appendix A) respondents agreed with this concern and stressed the need to develop a friendly relationship with individuals to build trust.
Many resources are needed to initiate CERT training in Spanish. Investigation broke it down into three areas; resources to develop curriculum, resources to aid in recruitment of students, and resources for instruction of classes.

FEMA’s curriculum was the standard resource utilized for curriculum development. It was used either unmodified or was the basis for developing geographic specific curriculum. The Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal’s (2002) report and O’Neil’s (1996) article both made reference to the use of community colleges for assistance with translation. Survey respondents also used colleges to assist in the modification of FEMA’s curriculum. During interviews with individuals like Nilsen-Solares from Washington County Health and Human Services, Trujillo, a local Hispanic Firefighter, and program coordinators like Kemp of Los Angeles Fire Department and Robles of Orlando Fire Department, there were many offers of assistance for developing curriculum.

The number one suggestion of survey respondents for recruitment was to utilize churches. This was also supported by the Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal (2002) and Nilsen-Solares (2003). Other locations suggested to aid in recruitment were schools, laundromats, Spanish radio stations, and local stores.

It would appear from this research that recruitment might be the most difficult aspect of conducting Spanish CERT training in Hillsboro. This is likely due to the financial and trust concerns already addressed. It is always more difficult to establish a program than to build on it. Robles stated, “Plan to start slow. Our first class held eight students with only four graduating. It is difficult to generate interest in the Hispanic community” (personal communication, September 13, 2004).
The survey (Appendix A) asked respondents to identify where their instructors came from. The common response was bilingual CERT members the organization trained to be instructors. Some organizations had bilingual instructors on staff and others used bilingual volunteers to translate during instruction. The presence of bilingual instructors on staff would be preferable to an organization, as it would allow for easy modification of curriculum and provide consistency to the program. Gutshick (2002) reiterated this belief and felt the instructor needed to have the flexibility to modify the lesson plan based on the needs of the students. Through the work of Connie King (2004), HFD will be hiring a bilingual outreach program coordinator to aid the department in this endeavor.

Another instructional resource that Los Angeles Fire Department is evaluating is a translator transmitter produced by Williams Sound Corporation (personal communication, Kemp, July 20, 2004). This option does not appear to be appropriate for HFD because its main advantage is simultaneous translation of different languages.

The implications to HFD are clear. HFD should conduct CERT training in Spanish. The Spanish curriculum is readily available from FEMA but should be reviewed for appropriateness to our community. The major concerns to address are building trust within the Hispanic community, and the financial and educational levels of Hillsboro’s Hispanic residents. HFD should rely on more visual and verbal instruction when presenting this class rather than written text. Recruitment will be difficult at first. However, with sensitivity to the community needs, trust will be built and the program can grow. HFD, not currently having bilingual staff, will need to recruit Spanish-speaking instructors.
Recommendations

The CERT Participant Manual states, “In 2003, President Bush asked all Americans to volunteer in the service of their country. . . . CERT was selected as one of the primary programs offered to the American public to meet this challenge” (CERT Los Angeles, 2004, Manuals, Introduction, para. 3). This call to service was to all residents of the United States. CERT is designed to give individuals the necessary tools to help themselves and their neighbors when normal emergency services are overwhelmed and unavailable. It is during these times of need when the trained citizen can be the most help to HFD and our community. This need is not specific to any single group of residents. For this reason, CERT training needs to be made available to the nearly 19% of Hillsboro’s population that is Hispanic.

The research would recommend HFD follow other organizations that have utilized FEMA’s Spanish CERT program as opposed to doing completely translating our English program. HFD should contact local colleges, Hispanic community outreach organizations like Washington County Health and Human Services and bilingual firefighters to evaluate FEMA’s curriculum and recommend changes that would be appropriate for our Hispanic community. These changes should be based on hazards specific to our region, educational levels, dialect of our Hispanic community, and possibly changes to the visual aids that make the course more specific to Hillsboro.

It is also recommended that HFD address cultural issues. Cultural diversity training needs to continue in Hillsboro to better understand the views of the Hispanic community. CERT training must take into consideration the roles of Hispanic men and women in their community and day-to-day lives, financial concerns, and cultural
perceptions of authority figures. As other organizations have done, HFD could provide childcare during class perhaps by partnering with a church to provide this service. HFD should also consider changing the class format to accommodate the students. One option is to spread the class out over more than 8 weeks. Another is to condense the class to four weekends of six hours each. In any case, the class schedule should be based on the needs of the students, not on tradition.

The most important recommendation identified by this research is the need to be aware of, and to address, fear and distrust of authority by the Hispanic community. This issue is not brought upon HFD by their actions, rather by a lack of awareness within the Hispanic community. Methods for overcoming this cultural misunderstanding were not adequately defined by the research. HFD should further investigate methods of resolving the fear and distrust felt by the Hispanic community. Both survey respondents and the literature review pointed out that personal interaction by fire department personnel within the Hispanic community would be a step towards reducing the level of fear.

The final recommendation from this research has to do with targeted resources. First is the need to establish appropriate curriculum. Second is the recruitment of the students. Last is the instruction or actual conduction of the class. Curriculum resources have previously been addressed.

This research discovered that recruitment of Hispanic CERT students might prove to be difficult. From this research, it is recommended that HFD first contact local churches that have Spanish programs. This resource naturally brings a level of trust that HFD will need when establishing this training. Assistance with logistical issues such as childcare or hosting the training may also be available. Advertising the training through
local Spanish radio and flyers sent home from school with Hispanic children would enhance recruitment.

When considering resources for conducting the training, HFD needs to focus on bilingual instructors. During recruitment of a bilingual outreach program coordinator, knowledge of the CERT program should be given a high priority. Second, neighboring CERT program coordinators and fire departments should be approached to recruit bilingual instructors since HFD has no bilingual staff. Last, a survey of existing CERT members, to determine bilingual capabilities, should be initiated with the goal of training instructors.

Conducting CERT training in Spanish will require HFD to look outside of its traditional methods of public education and to examine the culture of Hillsboro’s Hispanic community.
References


