

# Benicia Emergency Response Team



## Newsletter



Volume 5, Number 1

Benicia, California

November 2008

## Annual Muster November 12, 2008, 7:00 PM

### Benicia Clock Tower

All BERT members, current students and class applicants are requested to attend  
See Page 8 for details



**Marion McKown,**  
Chairman,  
BERT Support Group

It's been another productive year for the Benicia Emergency Response Training program for the City of Benicia and the Benicia Fire Department. The BFD never "rests on their laurels," they are always searching for a better way to implement the training we have. Captain K.C. Smith, our BERT coordinator, has some exciting new programs for this coming year. The support that our BERT group receives from the fire department never waivers. We have a working partnership and a mutual respect that ensures the continuing success of this important program.

Thanks to all of the BERT volunteers for donating their time and talents throughout the year as without you, we would not exist!

AND – we have more to look forward to in 2009.

The quarterly training will change. Dr. Constance Beutel, our continuing education coordinator, is already planning and plotting new skill sessions to keep us up-to-date and aware of any changes in the Benicia Fire Department's protocols. Make

sure you read her column in this Newsletter.

You will also be reading Jean Colomy's article. Every graduate of the BERT program is tracked in her database. I lost track of how many Excel files she has. One with every graduate on it, then the breakdown of management zones (that will change this coming year), then one for everyone who is on the waiting list to take the course, then one for - - well, you get the idea. If she forgets to show up for Bocce Ball, it means that she still has her head in the computer and she has forgotten what day it is.

Class #18 is currently in progress and will

cont'd on page 2



Class 16 students participate in skills Saturday on March 1st, 2008 at the Benicia Fire Museum



from page 1 graduate on Saturday, November 22nd. At that point, all of our City Council members and our Mayor will have completed the BERT training and they fully support the program. We thank them!

One of our goals is to include more of the Benicia Citizen Corps Council (BCCC) volunteers into BERT activities. The BCCC is the umbrella organization under which public safety volunteers operate. That includes Police Volunteers (VIPS), Neighborhood Watch, Volunteer Fire, Red Cross, Amateur Radio (Hams) and local churches that have emergency response programs.

Many of our Amateur Radio operators also belong to the Solano County Sheriff's Auxiliary Communication Service (ACS) and train monthly at the

Office of Emergency Services in Fairfield.

We are also inviting other Solano County CERT representatives to join us at our muster.

If it takes a village to raise a child, then the City of Benicia has been responsible for raising the standards of excellence by participating and supporting the BERT program.

We thank all of you.

**Marion McKown** –  
BERT Support Group Committee Chairman.





**Chief Gene Gantt**

### **A message from the Fire Chief's Office**

We are getting ready to start the seventh year of BERT training. We started this program with hopes, dreams and a lot of work and I can say we have done so much in this time.

We have gone from once-a-week hands-on and lecture classes to the DVD program and now we have taken the BERT program to the World Wide Web. Captain KC Smith has been working very hard to get the entire program on the web. By doing this, students enrolled in this training program can sit at home (or work!) and get BERT training. Stay tuned for more on this exciting new method of training delivery.

Over the past few months, there have been some major changes at the Benicia Fire Department. Fire Chief Ken Hanley retired; I was appointed the new Fire Chief. We have gone through a major reorganization within the department. Tim Winfield and Pete Fiori have been promoted to Division Fire Chiefs. Division Chief Winfield has direct oversight over disaster preparedness and mitigation programs. Tim will be working with Captain Smith and the BERT Support Group to continue improving our programs.

I would like to thank everyone who works to keep this wonderful and essential program growing and improving in Benicia. Thank you for your willingness to help your neighbors, friends and the City by being a BERT trained volunteer.

**Gene Gantt, Fire Chief**

### **BERT moves into 2009**

BERT is leading the forefront in the region if not the country in innovative ways of preparing volunteers for when the next disaster strikes.

It wasn't that long ago that the Benicia Fire Department began to meet the needs of its citizens following the September 11th attacks, with stacks

of copied slides from the San Francisco Fire Department's NERT program.

In 2009 the Benicia Fire Department will unveil BERT training on the Internet to its citizens, allowing the people of Benicia to take part in Benicia Fire Department's BERT Program from the web. This program allows users to get the same info, as in a structured class setting, but at their schedule following the weekly format.



**Fire Captain KC Smith  
BERT Coordinator**

This year our theme was "Taking To The Streets;" our training emphasized those vital skills and organization techniques that are vital in working in and around a disaster setting. Next year we will continue to emphasize them with "Shoring Up The Neighborhoods." In 2009 BERT will continue to hit the basics in preparedness, team building and organization. These core concepts will steer each member, and assist each team when a major disaster strikes again.

Each BERT Team represents the City's eyes and ears. Each member is part of the entire response and recovery effort. You, the first responders on the ground, and the information you report back will greatly assist the planners in where resources may be deployed and in prioritizing rescue efforts. Preparedness at all levels is what we strive for. 2009 will be an exciting year for BERT. Thank you for your participation in the program and your commitment in assisting to keeping Benicia prepared.

### **Next two BERT Classes Scheduled**

**Live Class:** 1/27/09 thru 3/3/09 (Six Tuesdays)

**Internet Class:** Week of 1/26/09 thru the week of 3/2/09 (Six weeks)

**Skills Day** for both Live and Internet Classes 3/7/09

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**Live Class:** 3/10/09 thru 4/14/09 (Six Tuesdays)

**Internet Class:** Week of 3/9/09 thru the week of 4/13/09 (Six Weeks)

**Skills Day** for both Live and Internet Classes 4/18/09

Anyone wishing to sign up for any of the courses needs to go to [www.BERTTraining.com](http://www.BERTTraining.com) and signup as a BERT member. Then they need to sign up for the class of their choice.

**Captain KC Smith**



**Division Fire Chief Tim Winfield**

As I was preparing to write this article, I drafted several false starts, which have all found themselves in the waste paper bin. The reason was that I had been trying too hard to produce a perfect introduction for you, which would leave nothing to question. Unfortunately that contradicted some of the very important points that I wanted to make in this article about my new role within the Benicia Fire Department.

I was promoted to the position of Fire Division Chief just three short months ago. One of my new responsibilities includes disaster preparedness for the City. Since then, I have had the privilege of working with many of you as members of the Benicia Emergency Response Team but I, like many other emergency services personnel and the public, was oblivious to the many capabilities and multitude of roles that BERT provides.

As BERT members, you work with public safety on many projects. In our zeal to provide more exposure to both the public and emergency service



Class 16 conducts triage training

providers, I want to let you know that I am a resource you can use to continue to make the BERT program the best it can be.

In the area of disaster preparedness, I am responsible for managing and administrating the City's BERT program and perform a wide range of the emergency management functions, including project management, research, training, public education, and coordinating committees, task forces and volunteers.

The foundation that has been laid by previous Fire Chief Ken Hanley, current Fire Chief Gene Gantt, and Fire Captain KC Smith truly has allowed this program to become one of the most sought after examples with regards to other communities starting a similar program. However, Chief Gantt and Captain Smith have not stopped at the foundation. They continue to build the program by taking advantage of technology, which will open the door for more members to get the important training that you have taken and will allow better coordination with future activities. Captain Smith and I will continue to look for opportunities to make this program even better and you should feel free to contact us with your thoughts and ideas.

Additionally, I wanted to touch base about the Benicia Citizen Corps Council (BCCC). The BCCC is a group of public safety professional and volunteer organizations that meet several times a year to exchange ideas and share plans. Member organizations include BERT, Red Cross, Volunteer Fire, Neighborhood Watch, Volunteers in Police Services, Benicia Fire, Benicia PD, and Benicia Unified School District. We are currently looking for a chairperson for this very valuable organization. Interested parties should contact me at the Fire Department.

In closing, I want to thank you for your continued interest and participation in the BERT program. From my position as the City's Emergency Operations Center Manager, I know your efforts are making Benicia better prepared in any emergency.

Division Fire Chief Tim Winfield

**Easy-to-remember BERT email addresses**

- |                  |                            |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| Marion McKown    | Marion@BeniciaBERT.com     |
| Jean Colomy      | Jean@BeniciaBERT.com       |
| Constance Beutel | Constance@BeniciaBERT.com  |
| Art Mayoff       | Art@BeniciaBERT.com        |
| Len Corbaley     | Len@BeniciaBERT.com        |
| Tom Clausen      | TomClausen@BeniciaBERT.com |
| Tee Shirt Orders | TeeShirts@BeniciaBERT.com  |
| Catch-all/misc   | Info@BeniciaBERT.com       |



**Constance Beutel, Ed.D.**  
Quarterly Training/  
Curriculum Coordinator

## Quarterly Training

### An ongoing success story

We've had another successful BERT *Continuing Training* Year thanks to all the hard work by: the BERT faculty (Marion McKown, Jean Colomy, Len Corbaley, Virginia Schaefer, Ray Pereira, Louise Bond, Joyce Gray, Dr. Lynn Lobo and Sue Balala); our BERT colleagues who donated their homes as drill sites: David

and Linda Beemon, Dr. Lynn Lobo, Sue Balala; Captain KC Smith and Chief Gene Gantt (and now retired Chief Ken Hanley); our good friend of BERT, Roger Smith who has voluntarily given of his time to video tape our drills; Benicia's Ham operators for the comm link to the EOC; and Starbucks on Military for keeping us caffeinated with coffee for each of our drills!

We outdid ourselves this year through continued sophistication of our Drill experience. Here's a sample of what we've accomplished:

> We did **Take to the Streets!** – that is, we did what we said we were going to do in 2008. As we will respond to Benicia Disasters in our neighborhoods, that's where we drilled. We got to know and experience our topography and housing.

> We **alerted our Neighbors of upcoming drills** in the 'hood' with very clever door hangers. This provided both a heads up as well as continuing publicity and recruitment.

> We **got used to setting up Drill stations** that simulate the kind of work we need to be able to do quickly in establishing a Command Post/Staging Site in the event of a disaster.

> We were able to.. now pay attention because this is important.. **intake drill participants, brief and deploy teams within 30 minutes** of each of our staged drills! This agility will save lives in the event of a disaster.

> We **successfully collaborated with our Benicia Citizen Corps Council members**, Benicia Amateur Radio Club (BARC), Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS) and Red Cross. BARC Ham Operators, Len Corbaley and Art Mayoff staffed the Emergency Operations Center taking our radio traffic and reports from each drill site, VIPS personnel provided on-site traffic and safety protection.

> We've had over **15,000 views of our BERT videos** on YouTube (search CMBbeutel at Youtube)! What we are doing in Benicia is being used not only in the Northern California area, but around the world!

Each of the Quarterly drills engaged over 50 BERT members with 200 BERT attendees in all. That's pretty amazing for a small community like Benicia. Congratulations!

We have plenty to work on for 2009! Our training drills have shown a need for leadership training, knowledge and skill sharpening in all aspects of BERT response, but especially triage and emergency medicine and quick and accurate response by teams.



BERT rescuers evacuate "Ernie" at a recent a recent quarterly training drill.

## Let the Games Begin: 2009

To this end, sparked by an idea that Captain KC Smith proposed, in 2009 we will add some fun and competition to our training drills as we move into "The Arena."

We will form participants into teams, either on the spot the day of the drill, or hopefully there will be some Map Page/Quadrant Teams who are eager to compete and show their 'stuff.'

We will use an open site location and will set up competition elements. We will continue with our Quarterly Drill themes, i.e., First Quarter – Disaster Scenario; Second Quarter – Search and Rescue; Third Quarter – Triage and Emergency Medicine, but we will stage each Drill appropriate to the quarterly theme.

### For every Quarterly Drill, the following will be a competition element:

> Establishment of the staging area/Command Post: intake and team assignment processing/documentation; radio frequencies and contact with the EOC, etc.

> Formation of teams, team assignments, selection of team leader

> BERT form completion and reporting

> Appropriate radio protocol usage

We will be looking for speed, thoroughness and accuracy. Naturally, Team Champions will be declared. We're hoping to rustle up some prizes as well, in addition to the incredible glory that will come with winning.

2009 should be a lot of fun for us . . . remembering the seriousness of keeping our skills and knowledge current and sharp.

My best wishes for you and your family in the coming holiday season and New Year!

**Constance M. Beutel, EdD,**  
BERT volunteer and Coordinator of Continued Training

## Your Best Defense In a Disaster - Is You!

My good friend Virginia Schaefer, a fellow BERT member and Ham, brought me an article by New York Times columnist Tara Parker-Pope. As an employee Tara had "blown-off" fire and evacuation drills and just stayed at her desk and continued to do her work. On 9/11 when the call came to evacuate the building, one of her co-workers had to lead her to the stairs and the exit because she didn't know where to go.



**Marion McKown,**  
Chairman,  
BERT Support Group

Ms. Pope has reviewed a book *The Unthinkable: Who Survives When Disaster Strikes – And Why* by Amanda Ripley (Crown Publishers, \$24.95). Amanda Ripley is a journalist who has covered floods, fires and plane crashes for Time Magazine. She has not only collected stories from survivors but has also studied the science of disaster preparedness and homeland security.

One of the main lessons is that panic, fear and denial may be inevitable during a disaster but your brain will perform best in a stressful situation if you have already put it through a few rehearsals.

That's why drills are so important. You need to walk to the exit with your family so that your brain can store the physical memory of the experience.

Amanda Ripley states that "Your brain works by pattern recognition and when it is in an extremely frightening situation, it sorts through a database for a script." She also states that "Your brain responds better to a physical exercise, than the spoken word.... A common disaster behavior is the tendency to stick around and gather things – forget your purse or your laptop, or that phone call you have to make, or getting something out of the overhead on a plane – MOVE!"

So that's why drills are so important. We're programming our brain so after the initial jolt of whatever kind, we go into survival mode.

Another quote from Amanda Ripley "You have to be an agent in your own survival. You and your co-workers and neighbors are going to be there, not homeland security paratroopers."

Now isn't that what our BFD trainers have been telling us?

She also said that "the more confidence you have before the event, the less debilitating the fear will be and the better your performance will be."

As I write this article, I am on page 90 (of about 240) and I'm saying Yes! Yes!! Yes!! on almost every page. I'm sure that first



Class 17 students practice carrying a victim on April 26, 2008

responders have had a lot of these types of simulations, but it should be mandatory reading for the rest of us. Her interviews with responders from everywhere under all kinds of stressful situations (9/11, earthquakes, hostage situations, war, gun fights, etc.) explains why our brains react the way they do and how training kicks in and helps us cope. Amazing!

Amanda's book *The Unthinkable: Who Survives When Disaster Strikes – And Why* is an excellent read. Both Ms. Ripley and the Benicia Fire Department have generously donated multiple copies of the book as door prizes at the 2008 Muster. [Ed Note: This book is available on Amazon.com for \$16.47]

Marion McKown

**BERT Tee-Shirts are available for \$11 at**  
TeeShirts@BeniciaBERT.com

**Stay Informed - Join the BERT Forum**  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Beniciabert/>

The BERT Newsletter is edited by BERT member



Art Mayoff, (707) 746-5858 and published by the Benicia Fire Department, 150 Military West, Benicia, CA. Articles without attribution are written by the editor. Stories, articles, photos and profiles are invited. Submissions may be sent to the editor at:  
Art@BeniciaBERT.com

## A few words from our database manager

As the membership grows, so do the files. It is now more important than ever to keep all membership information up to date. The reason for that is to make sure that each and every one of you receives the latest data for meetings, drills, new information and the like. This can only be done if each of you make sure that the information I have on file is correct. If there are any changes to your name, home address, home phone, cell phone or e-mail, be sure to let me know so that it can be changed in the file and you will continue to receive your mail.

When the information is wrong and mail bounces or phone messages go unanswered, it takes a lot of time for me to do the research. It is much faster to correct the wrong information than to re-search it. If you are moving out of the City, please let me know. (jean@BeniciaBERT.com) If you are no longer interested in BERT, let me know that too and it will save us both time and energy, in sending and deleting unwanted messages.

We try to send information via e-mail, and some larger packets are sent via Post Office. We also do phone messages. So as you see, proper information is essential.



**Jean Colomy**

BERT Database Manager

Jean Colomy (707) 745-1544  
Benicia Support Group Database Manager



A BERT Team does *Damaged Building Sizeup* during quarterly training



Class 16 students practice the "buddy system" and use the PASS (Point - Aim - Squeeze - Sweep) technique to extinguish a fire



March 2008 quarterly training - Ham Radio Operators staff Comm Table

## Ham Radio and BERT

Home study has continued to prove extremely successful as more BERT members are getting their Amateur Radio licenses. Several copies of the self-study guide written by California author Gordon West are available at the Benicia library. All the exam questions (and answers) are included in the book titled: *Technician Study Guide*. There is even an interactive exam CD that allows the student to practice taking randomly generated tests and follow along with the material in the text book. And as I mentioned in last year's BERT Newsletter, the pass rate is approaching 100 percent. BERT members with Ham Radio questions may email Art Mayoff at [Art@BeniciaBERT.com](mailto:Art@BeniciaBERT.com)

Hundreds of photos taken at BERT classes and refreshers along with training videos can be viewed online. Visit the BERT Website at: [www.BeniciaBERT.com](http://www.BeniciaBERT.com)

# Agenda for the Benicia Citywide BERT Muster

Wednesday, November 12, 2008, 7 PM

at the

**Clock Tower Arsenal Building  
1189 Washington Street  
Benicia**



Please arrive 15-30 minutes early to allow for parking and seating assignments and an opportunity to browse the display tables.

## When you arrive

You will be directed to one of six intake tables. Each table will be responsible for surnames beginning with different groups of letters of the alphabet, such as A-C, D-G, etc. A BERT volunteer will give you your packet.

## Display Tables

We have arranged for several public safety agencies to staff display tables. Additionally, Easy Survival Kits, Inc. an emergency kit vendor, will have kits for sale at special pricing for BERT members.

## ID Cards

Please bring and wear your BERT ID card.

## Overview of the Event

- Doors open 6:30 PM - Elevator available if needed.
- Browse the display tables; meet your team members

### 7:00 PM

- Call to Order - Pledge of Allegiance
- Short Film Presentation
- Introductions - Marion McKown
- **Guest Speaker:** Mike Staley, Assistant Director of Disaster Volunteering and Preparedness, Governor's Office of Volunteers
- BERT goes big on the Internet in 2009 - Captain KC Smith

**Break** - 20 minutes - Coffee and Cookies - Display Tables: Red Cross, Salvation Army, Volunteer Fire, Police Volunteers, Easy Survival Kits, etc.

### Reconvene

- Ham Radio - Art Mayoff
- Quarterly Training 2009 - "Let the Games Begin" Dr. Constance Beutel

### Door Prizes

- **HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS WORTH.** Everyone gets a free raffle ticket for the door prize drawing

