



## Ensuring Safety at CERT Command Posts

What do you think is the most dangerous locations at a ski resort? The beginners hill? The Double Black drops through the rocks and trees? The race courses? It's none of the above. Where most injuries occur at "the slopes" aren't even on the slopes. The parking lot is the location of most injuries followed by the cafeteria. Surprised? The "obvious" threats aren't necessarily the most likely ones.

When I worked at a ski resort, I saw its general manager become its risk manager after resort insurance rates went through the roof. He declared every employee from rental shop workers to the operations manager as a safety official. He empowered each employee to mitigate any safety issue even if it meant stopping lift operations, closing a trail, or shutting down the cafeteria. As an instructor, I was allowed to remove a lift ticket of any egregiously reckless skier. (I never had to.) The point is: safety was the resort's top priority.

Likewise, a CERT-member's number one priority is safety – personal safety and the safety of the team and the victim. There is no higher precedence. San José CERT leaders and teams must emphasize and practice safety again and again. The goal is everyone leaves an exercise or deployment on their feet with no detours to the hospital.

I used to be the safety officer (among other duties) at a startup production company. Later, I ran my own production business – a job with many opportunities to get hurt. My workers dealt with heavy gear, hot lighting equipment, tight spaces, unfamiliar locations, foul weather, moving through dimly-lit tunnels, even filming from bucket lifts three-stories high. A safety briefing always preceded each day's shoot. At the shop, my employees were empowered to stop whatever they were doing to address any safety issue. If they saw a wet floor, they either mopped it up or reported to me. A loose bolt on the garage door, they tightened it and reported it to me. Tripping hazards from cables and power lines? They taped it down. In my five years in that business, we never suffered one injury. And that was no accident.

The basic CERT training emphasizes safety as well. But under the stress of dealing with an emergency, it's easy to get distracted and forget this most important point. To this end, I've added an IC Post crewmember position called the Safety, Security, and Health (SSH) Chief. The primary function of this position is to ensure the well-being of the post and those involved there. The duties include the continued integrity of the post structure(s), providing access to a fire extinguisher and first aid, mitigating trip and overhead hazards, and providing sufficient lighting. Not all... (continued on page 2)

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(continued from page 1) ...disasters happen in the light of day. The SSH ensures the proper placement of equipment including generators, batteries, cables and more. Other duties include securing CERT and personal property. The SSH Chief also ensures crewmembers are hydrated and fed. The SSH Chief co-ops with the Planning Chief to ensure the types and quantities of needed safety-related material are on hand. These are only a portion of the duties. Including a dedicated safety post crewmember position is well-worth considering.

While you may or may not choose to include an SSH position for your posts, I strongly suggest that your exercises include everyone identifying hazards and safety infractions in real time so that you can immediately find ways to avoid them or at least mitigate them effectively.

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