

# Alameda and Palo Alto of California Implement CERT Best Practices with Veoci



## The Customers

Two of California's Bay Area cities, Alameda and Palo Alto, are active participants in the state's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program. Through this program, Alameda and Palo Alto manage trained volunteers and mobilize them to assist officials during emergency response scenarios within their respective jurisdictions. CERT is a standing practice in the state, and one these two local governments hold strongly to.

## CERT in the Bay Area

CERT is a grassroots initiative. Every participant, with the exception of official administrators, is a trained and certified volunteer. Alameda and Palo Alto both dispatch certified volunteers in their respective jurisdictions to assist officials during emergencies. To do this, a citizen must first register themselves as a volunteer with their local government and complete a mandatory training class.

Of course, this requires opening registration to the public and giving citizens the opportunity to participate. Both Alameda and Palo Alto have seen hundreds of citizens join their individual programs. These two municipalities also manage the status of the volunteers, provide them with news and updates, and point them to additional learning resources, such as FEMA's library of materials.

## Operating CERT

Given the structure and nature of the program, the officials in these cities need a public registration process. Volunteers also need to be aware of the training required of and available to them, as well as additional learning materials.

CERT participation requires training and

certification, which are two things Alameda and Palo Alto must track. No volunteer can assist until they've finished at least the basic classes. Their training status has to be accessible and up to date to ensure only certified volunteers are sent into a response.

Regular communication is instrumental to the success of each municipality's program as well. A foundation for simple back-and-forth communication is important to these cities' CERT initiatives. Updates and recent developments bolster the preparedness and resiliency of the local volunteer community. These exchanges between officials and the volunteers need a reliable channel.

A similar need exists for notifications. Mass notification is a cornerstone of CERT; hundreds of volunteers have to see the request as it comes from officials. This functionality establishes a quick dialogue between officials and volunteers which garners aid from the community. Mass notification must be incorporated into a CERT program, and it must be through a medium that guarantees a response to an emergency.

## The Veoci Solution

For these grassroots initiatives, Veoci has proven itself as technology worth investing in.

Alameda and Palo Alto both kick off volunteer registration with a public-facing Veoci Workflow. Any resident within the jurisdiction of Alameda can answer the questions in this step of the Workflow and submit their application by accessing its unique URL; Palo Alto also uses a public Veoci Workflow to accomplish this. After this step, the Workflow goes to officials for review.



Once a resident finishes their registration and begins their training classes, officials in both municipalities track the volunteer's training progress through a Veoci Form. The Form continues tracking a volunteer once they're trained and certified as well, giving officials a full report on a volunteer and their status in the program.

Each city also uses Veoci as a primary communication pathway for its CERT volunteers.

Veoci Dashboards have become resource libraries for CERT members in these jurisdictions. Links to other Forms, Workflows, and shortcuts to external learning sources are spread across these one-stop-shops. The Dashboards in these solutions not only help hundreds of users navigate through Veoci and the web quickly, they increase the resilience of the community.

For Alameda, a Dashboard also provides a quick overview of the metrics of their CERT volunteers. This view is gated and only accessible by Alameda's officials. The data here includes the spread of volunteers across the city's

districts, day and night shift availability of the pool of volunteers, the number of hours volunteers have logged per year, and the cumulative total of the reimbursements volunteers have filed for.

For direct communication and collaboration, the message stream in a Veoci Room makes the difference for Alameda and Palo Alto. Officials and volunteers can message each other directly and start conversations through the message stream. Newsletters are even posted in the message stream by officials, which allows all the volunteers to read the latest developments at their own leisure.

A final and critical piece in these solutions is mass notification. When officials need to call on the CERT members in their respective jurisdictions, they send a custom message by phone call, SMS, and email. In just a few clicks, Alameda and Palo Alto can begin mobilizing a response for a developing emergency.

This Dashboard points Alameda's volunteers to a wealth of resources and tools.



**“Veoci is a really robust system... It’s a one stop shop for us now.”**

**Captain Sharon Oliver**  
**Disaster Preparedness Coordinator**  
**City of Alameda Fire Department**

### **The Results**

By using Veoci for their CERT programs, Alameda and Palo Alto can run a robust program ready to tackle any call it receives. The benefits these municipalities saw with these solutions were the following:

- A one-stop-shop for all things CERT
- A communication and notification pathway for delivering a message to hundreds of people at once
- A platform to scale to the needs of the program
- Simple and easy volunteer management