



Early Response Team Program

Providing a Caring Christian Presence in the Aftermath of Disaster

An Early Response Team's **primary purpose** is to stabilize, secure and clean out the homes of disaster-impacted survivors so that no further damage occurs. This early intervention restores hope and empowers survivors to take their next brave steps toward recovery.

Early Response Teams (ERTs) are specially trained to respond during the relief period following disasters by performing specific tasks that address families' immediate needs in order to ready homes for long-term recovery. For many survivors, ERTs' caring Christian presence may be the most important support they receive.

An ERT is neither an emergency response team nor a repair and rebuild team; rather, team members are trained to assist families to salvage and protect property and to prevent further damage. This intervention may also expedite recovery by allowing individuals and families to "shelter in place" and to maintain connections with community-based services, employment, education and supporting neighbors.

ERTs are expected to respond within their own annual conference when requested by the incident coordinator. Travel to another conference requires an invitation from the affected community. (Please see the deployment protocol for more information.)

Each annual conference should decide how ERTs fit into the conference disaster response plan.

All trainings referred to in the ERT Guidelines are in-person trainings. Other modes of training are outlined in supplemental documents.



What constitutes an UMCOR early response team?

Q. What are the basic requirements to serve on a UMCOR early response team (ERT)?

Basic ERT certification is a minimum requirement for all persons on a team. This provides a level of training, accountability, and safety for all team members and reassurance for survivors. Conference insurance programs necessitate training. Every team member must have a current badge to deploy.

Q. What are the qualifications to receive an ERT badge?

To qualify for the initial UMCOR ERT badge, a participant must

- Be 18 years or older
- Attend the class led by an authorized trainer
- Complete and pass the background check with UMCOR
- Pass the ERT basic class quiz

Q. May I serve on a team if I have not had the training?

UMCOR understands the reality of emergencies and that there may not be enough trained volunteers to fill an in-conference team following a significant disaster. If there are members of the team's church who haven't had the opportunity to be trained but fit the age and health criteria, it is acceptable to add them to a team and provide some just-in-time training for them. The team assumes responsibility for these supplemental team members, who should not comprise more than 50% of the team and *must* be known and vouched for by trained ERT members.

Q. What about team leaders? Do they have to be trained?

In every case, the team leader must be ERT-trained.

Q. Can spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers (SUVs) who show up at a disaster site serve on an ERT?

UMCOR does not recommend taking spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers on a team. Volunteer coordinators in the impacted conference should establish protocols for accepting SUVs and deciding where they will be able to work.