



# CERTified Life Savers

*A city program that helps you  
save yourself and your neighbors*

BY KELLY KENOYER | PHOTOS BY ROB & TRACY SYDOR

Several CERTs venture into the  
darkness looking for victims to help

**J**oining the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) is a bit like going through the five stages of grief. You start, of course, with denial: There won't be an earthquake in my lifetime! And, if there is, it won't actually be that bad. And if it's bad, I'll probably just die and it'll be fine (says the cynic). But say you're a realist and you want to survive the earthquake (or any other kind of disaster). In that case, you can train yourself to get ready by taking a free month-long CERT class provided by the city of Eugene.

Once you begin CERT, you're confronted with the truth of the matter and enter stage two: panic. Unlike the stages of grief, where anger follows denial, in this stage you get sad, frightened and clammy at the same time.

I'll try to instill the same feeling in you, if I may.

The Cascadia subduction zone is long overdue for an earthquake, and when it comes, it will be devastating. Seismologists give us a 1-in-3 chance of a 8.0 magnitude quake in the next 50 years, or 1-in-10 for a much bigger 9.0 quake. Earthquakes of that magnitude are serious anywhere — just look at the devastation caused by the 9.1 magnitude quake in Japan in 2011 — but they'll be much worse in the woefully underprepared Pacific Northwest.

The earth will shake for about 5 or 6 minutes, causing liquefaction, landslides and ground failure.

Many homes will collapse or become unusable during the 8.0 or 9.0 quake, especially

those built before 1974, when the first seismic building codes were introduced in Oregon. In my neighborhood, Fairmont, 74 percent of the homes were built before the 1970s, according to a 2011 analysis.

Very few neighborhoods in Eugene have underground power cables, making downed power lines a dramatic threat in the hours and days following the quake. Broken roads will be all but impassible for several weeks.

Emergency responders will be tied up dealing with major impacts at factories and large apartment complexes for several days, meaning most of us in the city will be entirely on our own for a while. Due to the likelihood of damage to I-5 and the high possibility of collapsed bridges across the Willamette River, we may not see outside support coming to Eugene for several weeks.

Joe Harwood, a spokesman for EWEB, says, "You need to have two or three gallons [of water] per person per day, and you need to store it, and you need to be ready to essentially survive on your own for at least a week, if not longer."

In other words, we will need to depend on ourselves, and our neighbors, to survive.

Are you frightened yet?

I broke into a cold sweat on my way home from the first class.

But there is a path to safety, and CERT training can show you the way.

The Community Emergency Response Team is a division of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which means volunteers are integrated into the greater scheme of rescue operations through the city. Patence Winningham, senior program coordinator with city of Eugene's emergency management department, says, "CERT is a