



# Superior Court of California County of Orange *News Release*

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## **American Red Cross Presents Court with Excellence in Disaster Preparedness Award**

**Santa Ana, CA** – The American Red Cross presented the Orange County Superior Court with an award for “Excellence in Disaster Preparedness” for the Court’s Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program. The American Red Cross established the award to recognize companies, organizations, and community groups for their superior emergency preparedness plans and to share model plans with other groups.

The Court’s Emergency Response and Security Services (ERSS) unit conducted an emergency preparedness analysis that revealed the need for a court-specific emergency plan and identified that employees wanted hands-on emergency training to prepare for disasters. As a result, the ERSS unit created and implemented an EOP and a hands-on CERT training academy.



***Pictured with the American Red Cross award for “Excellence in Disaster Preparedness” are Orange County Superior Court’s Facilities Manager, Anthony Palumbo; ERSS Staff Specialist, Gloria Aguirre; ERSS Manager, Justin Mammen; and Chief Executive Officer, Alan Carlson.***

The ERSS staff modeled its EOP on FEMA’s Incident Command System. The court’s plan has been revised often as a result of annual drills, real events, and tabletop exercises. ERSS staff also assists other trial courts in California with their emergency plans. A large number of people appear

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in Superior Court each year, most for only brief periods of time and, hopefully, only a few times during their lifetime. Consequently, it is especially important for court staff to be able to appropriately respond and assist those in the courthouse in the event of a disaster.

The multi-day CERT training includes the required FEMA curriculum, uses certified instructors, and adds court-specific training for court and justice partner employees who work in court facilities. Orange County Superior Court is the only court in the nation to have a recognized CERT program and one of the few in the nation with an EOP.

Since the first CERT academy in 2013, more than 120 employees have graduated which has the added benefit of improving the court's ability to respond and recover from a disaster. Graduates of the CERT program include court employees and employees of the court's justice partners such as the Orange County Probation Department, Victim Witness Programs, and Orange County Healthcare Agency. The success of the court's CERT program is attributed to key partnerships with the Orange County CERT Mutual Aid Program as well as police and fire departments that neighbor our court facilities.

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