

What Is Sizeup?

Sizeup is an ongoing process used to answer the question, "Is it safe for CERT members to attempt this task?"

- What hazards are present?
- What is the level of damage?
- What are the dangers to team safety?
- What can the team do based on their training and resources?
- How could conditions change and affect safety?

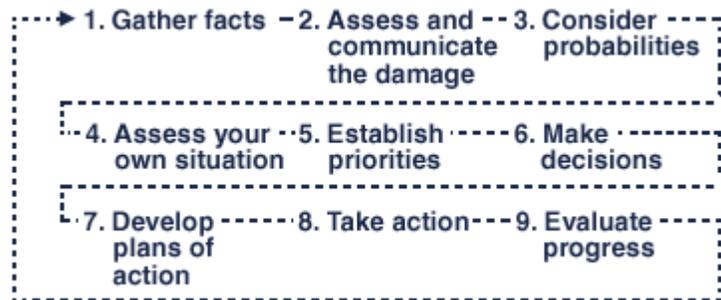


CERT leaders use sizeup to make good decisions about what actions teams should take.

Sizeup Steps

The nine steps involved in sizeup are:

1. Gather facts.
2. Assess and communicate the damage.
3. Consider probabilities.
4. Assess your own situation.
5. Establish priorities.
6. Make decisions.
7. Develop plans of action.
8. Take action.
9. Evaluate progress.



Step 1: Gather Facts

Facts about the situation will guide all CERT efforts. Some of the facts that CERT members should always consider are the:

Time of day and day of the week that the disaster occurred:

Populations shift by the time of the day and the day of the week. At night and on weekends, more victims are likely in residential neighborhoods. During working hours, more victims are likely in commercial buildings. Because CERTs operate in areas where they live or work, team members know much of this information. Some emergency services are not available, or are not available in the same numbers, during the evenings or on weekends.

CERT operations may also be affected by where people are located in their homes (for example, the bedroom versus the family room) and by the amount of daylight available.

Type and extent of damage:

Assessing the type and extent of damage as light, moderate, or heavy (defined below) will tell CERT members what, if anything, they should do and what resources they will need for the job.

For example:

- CERT members should never enter heavily damaged structures-structures that have fully or partially collapsed or have been moved off of their foundations.
- CERT members should never enter areas that are flooded.
- If utilities are damaged and can be shut off safely from the outside, CERT members can try to shut them off.
- A disaster that causes many injuries will require CERT members to do medical triage and treatment.

Damage

CERTs use general guidelines for assessing damage.

Light damage includes:

- Superficial damage.
- Broken windows.
- Fallen or cracked plaster.
- Minor damage to interior contents.

Moderate damage includes:

- Visible signs of damage.
- Decorative work that is damaged or has fallen.
- Visible cracks in plaster.
- Major damage to interior contents.

Heavy damage includes:

- Partial or total collapse or tilting.
- Obvious structural instability.
- Heavy smoke or fire, known hazardous materials (e.g., gas leaks), or rising or moving water.

Types of structures damaged:

Some types of structures are more dangerous because they are more susceptible to damage than others. Older structures and structures with long roof spans are examples. Some structures may contain hazardous materials.

The type of structure and its purpose can also tell:

- The number of people who may be trapped inside. For example, there is a much higher probability of multiple victims being trapped inside a shopping mall than inside a private home.
- Whether other hazards may exist. Structures designed for industrial uses carry a higher risk of other hazards such as hazardous materials.

Weather conditions:

Severe or extreme weather will have an effect on victims and rescuers alike and must be considered during rescue operations. Forecasts for severe or extreme weather (hot or cold) should serve as a limiting factor on the time period during which:

CERT operations can continue.

Victims can be exposed to the elements without additional adverse effects.

Other hazards:

Because the safety of CERT members is always the first priority, information gathered about other hazards that may be present at the scene can affect whether CERTs take action at all.

For example, CERT members should never:

- Attempt to operate where hazardous materials are present.
- Enter an area where water is running or that is flooded.
- Operate where there are other hazards that pose a threat to CERT member safety.

Step 2: Assess and Communicate Damage

There are several general guidelines for assessing and communicating damage.

When in doubt about the condition of a building, CERT members should always use the more serious damage assessment. **If unsure about whether a structure is moderately or heavily damaged, CERTs should assume heavy damage.**

This is because what CERTs do depends on whether a building is lightly, moderately, or heavily damaged. **CERT members should always put safety first.**

CERT Mission: Light Damage

Light damage to a structure is indicated by:

- Superficial or cosmetic damage.
- Broken or cracked plaster.
- Minor damage to the interior contents.

CERT Mission: Locate, triage, and treat victims. Prioritize the removal of victims to a medical treatment area.

CERT Mission: Moderate Damage

Moderate damage to a structure is indicated by:

- Decorative work damaged or fallen.
- Many visible cracks in plaster.
- Major damage to interior contents.

CERT Mission: Locate, triage, and evacuate victims. Minimize the number of rescuers and time inside the structure.

CERT Mission: Heavy Damage

Heavy damage to a structure is indicated by:

- Partial or total collapse or tilting.
- Obvious structural instability.
- Movement off foundation.

CERT Mission: Warn others of the danger. **Never enter heavily damaged structures.** If possible, shut off utilities from the outside and collect information to give to professional responders.

Step 3: Consider Probabilities

CERT members work in close proximity to dangerous situations. It is important to consider what could happen.

CERTs must identify potentially life-threatening risks with an eye toward:

- How stable the situation really is.
- What else could go wrong.
- What it all means for CERT activities.

How Stable the Situation Really Is...

After taking a lap around a structure (i.e., walking around the entire building, if possible), it may appear to have only light or moderate damage. However, nonstructural damage or instability inside the structure can pose real danger to CERT members. Rescuers need to evaluate their surroundings for changing situations. Do not get tunnel vision. Be sure to look up, down, and around for dangerous situations.

Think about what you already know about the structure that has been damaged.

For example:

- Homes may have hazardous materials such as lawn chemicals, paints, or other potentially hazardous materials stored within the structure.
- Furniture, bookcases, and hanging fixtures may be unstable.
- Electric and gas lines could be damaged.

It does not take long to answer these types of questions, but the answers could make a huge difference in how CERT members approach their activities.

What Else Could Go Wrong?

Based on information gathered during Steps 1 and 2 of the sizeup, take a few moments to play "What if . . .?" to try to identify additional risks that you and your buddies may face. For example:

- What if there is an aftershock?
- What if you smell or see smoke?

What if a wall that appears stable shifts and collapses?
What if the electricity fails while CERT members are in the building?

Applying "Murphy's Law" to the situation could save CERT members' lives.

What It All Means for CERT Activities

Based on the probabilities, think about what can be done to reduce the risks associated with those probabilities. For example:

- Is a spotter necessary to look for movement that could indicate a possible collapse and warn CERT members?
- Is some remedial action required to stabilize nonstructural hazards before beginning the search?

Remember, CERT member safety is the first priority!

Step 4: Assess Your Situation

Remember that sizeup is a cumulative process. Each step builds on previous steps until a decision can be made about safety and the CERT response. During Step 4 of the sizeup, CERT members will use everything that they've learned to answer the following questions:

- What problems have been identified?
- What resources are available to apply to these problems while maintaining safe operations?

Resources and Planning Questions

The three types of resources that CERT members need are listed below along with the associated planning questions. The answers to many of these questions may be determined during pre-disaster drills and activities conducted in your neighborhood or workplace.

Resource	Planning Questions
Personnel	Who lives and/or works in the area? During which hours are these people most likely to be available? What skills or hobbies do they have that might be useful for CERT operations? What might be the most effective means of mobilizing their efforts?
Equipment	What equipment is available locally that might be useful for CERT operations? Where is it located? Do you have it or can you get permission to use it? Can someone operate it safely?
Tools	What tools are available that might be useful for lifting, moving, or cutting disaster debris? What is available that could be used for splints, backboards, or other medical needs?

Step 5: Establish Priorities

The next step is to determine what should be done and in what order based on the principles of:

- CERT member safety as the number one priority.
- Doing the greatest good for the greatest number of people.
- Efficient use of the resources available.

The safety of CERT members is always the first priority and dictates CERT priorities.

Step 6: Make Decisions

Based on the priorities covered in Step 5, the CERT Team Leader makes decisions about what CERTs will do and in what order

Step 7: Develop Plan of Action

Step 7 is where all of the information gathered about the situation comes together. During this step, the Team Leader decides specifically how the team will conduct its operation, considering the highest priority tasks first.

Written Plan of Action

Simple plans do not need to be written. However, for complex situations, a written plan should be developed.

Even a simple written plan will:

- Help maintain focus on established priorities.
- Provide accountability for actions taken, resources applied, and expected outcomes.
- Provide post-incident documentation.

You may want to jot down notes. These notes can document changing conditions that require changes to your priorities or plans.

Steps 8 & 9: Take Action and Evaluate Progress

During Step 8, CERT members put the plan of action developed during Step 7 into action.

Step 9, Evaluate Progress, is the most critical step. Evaluation focuses on both the effectiveness and safety of the operation.

Remember that sizeup is ongoing. Evaluation results are fed back into the decision making process so that priorities and plans can be updated.