

Triage in a Disaster Environment ¹

General procedure for CERTs to conduct triage:

- **Step 1:** Stop, Look, Listen, and Think. Before your team starts, stop and size up the situation by looking around and listening. Think about your safety, capability, and limitations, and decide if you will approach the situation. If you decide to proceed, quickly make a plan about your approach that all members understand.
- **Step 2:** Conduct voice triage. Begin by calling out, “Community Emergency Response Team. If you can walk, come to the sound of my voice.” Speak loudly and firmly. If there are survivors who are ambulatory, tag them Minor/Green and direct them to a designated location. If rescuers need assistance and there are ambulatory survivors, then these survivors should be asked to provide assistance. These persons may also provide useful information about the location of the survivors. During triage, these individuals must be tagged Minor/Green. A green victim can be recruited to help keep the others in a safe location and tag other green victims. However, green victims cannot be required to stay onsite. Triage the casualty area first and come back to tag and count green victims afterwards.
- **Step 3:** Start where you stand, and follow a systematic route. Start with the closest survivors and work outward in a systematic fashion.
- **Step 4:** Evaluate each victim and tag them Immediate/Red, Delayed/Yellow, Minor/Green, or DEAD. Remember to evaluate the walking wounded. Remember to ASK for permission to treat if the individual is conscious. More about how to do a triage evaluation on next page.
- **Step 5:** Treat Immediate/Red survivors immediately. Initiate airway management, bleeding control, and/or treatment for shock for Category Immediate/Red survivors.
- **Step 6:** Document triage results for:
 - Effective deployment of resources
 - Information on the survivors’ locations
 - A quick record of the number of casualties by degree of severity

Rescuer’s safety is paramount during triage. Wear proper protective equipment and maintain situational awareness to avoid endangering your personal health.

¹ Excerpted from CERT BASIC TRAINING: INSTRUCTOR GUIDE, JANUARY 2011, CERT UNIT 3: DISASTER MEDICAL OPERATIONS — PART 1 and modified for clarity.

Remember – CERTs use triage to categorize survivors; they do not diagnose specific issues other than the 3 Killers: airway, breathing, and shock.

Evaluating a Survivor During Triage²

The goal of triage is to identify and treat survivors who need immediate care as rapidly as possible. The following information is an expansion of Step 4 on the previous page. There is a certain order for doing a triage evaluation – RPM – Respiration, Perfusion, Mental status. Every evaluation should be done in this order.

When conducting a triage evaluation:

- **Start with the airway.** At an arm's distance, make contact with the survivor and speak loudly. If the survivor does not respond, then:
 - Position the airway.
 - Look, listen, and feel. Get close for this step.
 - Check breathing rate. Abnormally rapid respiration (above 30 per minute) indicates shock. Maintain the airway and treat for shock; tag Immediate/Red.
 - If the victim is not breathing after two attempts to open the airway, then tag them "DEAD."
- Second, **check for bleeding.**
 - Stop uncontrolled bleeding.
 - Perform blanch test for Perfusion, aka capillary refill. (greater than 2 seconds should be marked Immediate/Red). *Perform test on an uninjured limb, if possible.*
 - **Or perform a radial pulse test.**
 - If pulse present or blanch test normal (less than 2 seconds), continue to assessment of mental status. Note abnormal pulse.
 - If pulse absent or blanch test abnormal (greater than 2 seconds), elevate status to Immediate/Red and look for obvious bleeding and treat for shock
- Third, **check mental status.** Ask victim to do simple task – 'touch your nose' or 'squeeze my hand'. If no response, the survivor's status is Immediate/Red.

If the survivor passes all tests, his or her status is Delayed/Yellow. If the survivor fails one test, status is Immediate/Red. You can perform mental status testing on any victim, even one that walked to the sound of your voice if you suspect that they are confused. Remember that everyone gets a tag.

NOTE – if victim is able to walk and passes all checks, tag them Minor/Green.

² Excerpted from CERT BASIC TRAINING: PARTICIPANT MANUAL, JANUARY 2011, CERT UNIT 3: DISASTER MEDICAL OPERATIONS — PART 1 and modified for clarity.