

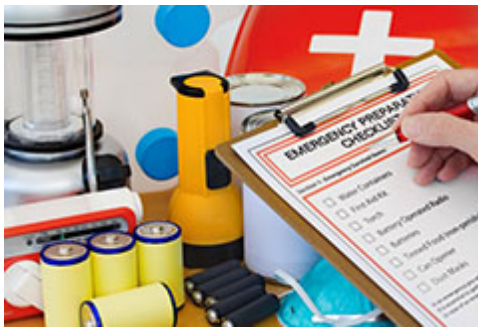


# **TEXAS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

**ONLINE** 2017 Vol. 64 No. 9

## **Message From The Chief**

### **National Preparedness Month**



September is National Preparedness Month. Our nation sets aside this month to remember the challenges we have overcome and reinforce the need for all to be prepared for disasters and emergencies. Being prepared is a shared responsibility; it takes the entire community. This September, I urge all Texans to commit to accomplishing the following simple tasks:

- Learn about hazards in your community and how to properly prepare and respond to them
- Build an emergency kit
- Make a communications plan
- Get involved in community preparedness by volunteering

Every incident and disaster, whether natural or manmade, presents us with unique elements and often unexpected consequences. Don't be lulled into thinking that the last big disaster was as bad as it could get, as there just may be another record waiting to be broken.

Additional links:



- [Make an Emergency Plan](#)
- [2017 National Preparedness Month](#)
- [America's PrepareAthon!](#)
- [Community Emergency Response Teams](#)
- [Volunteer in Texas](#)
- [Texas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster](#)
- [National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster](#)

## 9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance



September 11, 2001, forever changed our country. We lost friends, neighbors, and family members, but we gained a new sense of unity; a reminder of belonging to something bigger than ourselves. We realized a need to reevaluate our perspective towards emergency management and homeland security, and in doing so, became stronger. As we have pieced together a new strategy to protect and defend our nation, the effects have been felt not only at the national level but also at the state and local levels; in surges of volunteerism alone, this new generation has answered the call to service.

As another school year begins and we settle back into our familiar routines, it is imperative that we do not forget what we experienced 16 years ago. September 11, while a tragedy, brought with it solidarity, patriotism, and a reminder that tomorrow is never a guarantee. That dark day inspired communities across the nation to face the challenges of a global society head on. We remember those we lost, but do so in a way that our children understand the meaning of these words: Duty, Honor, Country.

### Other days to remember in August:

#### [Baby Safety Month](#)

September 8 – [1900 Galveston Hurricane Anniversary](#)

September 10 – [Grandparent's Day](#)

September 15 – [National POW/MIA Recognition Day](#)

September 20 – [Hurricane Beulah Anniversary \(1967\)](#)

September 24 – [Hurricane Rita Anniversary \(2005\)](#)

Chief W. Nim Kidd, MPA, CEM®, TEM®

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## Harris County Receives Award of Excellence for ReadyHarris App

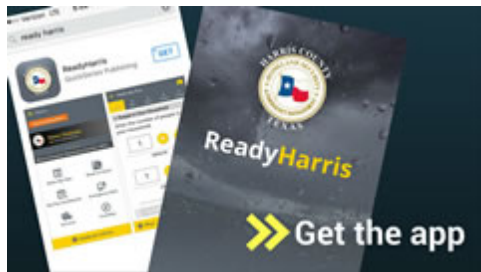


The Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (HCOHSEM) recently received an Award of Excellence for its *ReadyHarris* app from the Texas Association of Municipal Information Officers (TAMIO) at its annual conference.

HCOHSEM developed the *ReadyHarris* app to improve communications, emergency preparedness and resiliency for Harris County residents. Today, more than ever, people depend on their smartphones and mobile devices to communicate, get the latest news, navigate the internet and share information via social media.

"We are honored to be recognized by communication professionals from around the state for our mobile app," said Harris County Judge Ed Emmett. "The *ReadyHarris* app helps our residents better prepare and stay informed during emergencies."

Harris County is the third most populous county in the United States with more than 4.7 million residents, 34 cities, 57 fire departments, 125 law enforcement agencies, 22 major watersheds, and more than 1,200 municipal and public utility districts. It is home to the nation's largest petrochemical center and its proximity to the Gulf of Mexico make it vulnerable to tropical storms, but not exempt from other weather threats and man-made disasters.



The *ReadyHarris* app delivers real-time news and weather alerts, hosts a step-by-step guide to building a personalized family disaster plan, offers survival tip sheets, evacuation routes and locates emergency services. The app also has a "Share My Status" feature to help people keep in touch with others during and after a disaster. Its preparedness tips cover hurricanes, flooding, tornadoes, wildfires, winter storms,

thunderstorms, functional needs, pet preparedness and more.

"Every minute counts when severe weather, or any emergency, threatens our community," said Emmett. "The *ReadyHarris* app empowers residents to make a personal plan and receive life-saving information at their fingertips."

Since its release, the *ReadyHarris* app has been successfully promoted mainly through social media. In just a few months, the *ReadyHarris* app has been downloaded more than 12,300 times. This free app is available at the [Apple App Store and Google Play](#) in both English and Spanish.

The TAMIO awards recognize outstanding communication products in various categories including website, social media, video production and publications. Judging is conducted by non-TAMIO members with expertise in communications and local government.

The awards program, founded in 2001, serves as a professional high point for municipal communications work in Texas. Every year, new cities join the ranks of winners, showcasing their work for colleagues across Texas. In addition to peer recognition, members can learn more about best practices and

**[Rosio Torres](#)**

Media Specialist

Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management

(713) 426-9542

[ReadyHarris.org](#) | [Download our App](#)

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## Coordination is Key with Wireless Emergency Alerts



September is National Preparedness Month, and according to FEMA, the goal of National Preparedness Month is to increase the number of individuals, families, and communities who prepare for emergencies at home, work, businesses, schools, and places of worship. This year's theme is:

*Disasters Don't Plan Ahead, You Can. Don't Wait. Communicate.*

Communication is a critical function during any emergency. This is especially true when significant incidents threaten entire communities or large geographic areas. Coordination of communication is a lesser understood function during an emergency of regional, state or national significance.

FEMA issues warning messages at the local, regional, state and national level directly to customers of most of major cell phone carriers— including AT&T, Cellcom, Nextel, Sprint, T-Mobile, and US Cellular – through the Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS) or Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA). Customers are signed up automatically and not charged for this service. Messages automatically appear on customers' phone displays whether or not the text message feature is open and can include extreme weather warnings, alerts issued by the president, AMBER alerts, or looming threats to life and safety.

Wireless Emergency Alerts, another type of warning message, are free and have some text-like features. WEA are differentiated by a unique sound and vibration so that all consumers, including those with disabilities, can recognize and respond to warnings about a threatening situation. In 90 characters or less, a WEA states the following:

- Who is sending the alert
- What is happening
- Who is affected
- What action to take



Like text message warnings issued by cell carriers, consumers do not need to sign up for WEA. WEA allow government officials to send emergency alerts to all subscribers with WEA-capable devices if their wireless carrier participates in the program. Participating wireless carriers may offer subscribers the ability to block alerts such as those involving imminent threats to safety of life or AMBER Alerts, but consumers cannot block emergency alerts issued by the president.

However, more communication is not always better, especially if it is inconsistent or not coordinated with local or regional response operations. For example, a message to evacuate an area could be at odds

with the local jurisdiction's emergency evacuation procedures. Because WEA messages are geographically broadcast from cell phone towers, it is possible that customers at a safe distance from the threat might act on a WEA warning, unnecessarily clogging highways and diverting resources.

The emergency management community's best plan of action is to work closely with local, regional, state and national authorities to understand communications systems thoroughly before the incident occurs. This reduces the likelihood of surprise and confusion. Establish relationships with colleagues and other points of contact to be available in anticipation of a major incident. Review existing communication and evacuation plans, updating them if necessary. Coordinate with local and regional individuals and groups who are likely to be involved in such operations. Ultimately, take FEMA's advice: Don't wait, communicate.

For more information, contact your TDEM district coordinator or visit the [FEMA website](#).

[Bill Wahlgren](#), MSC

Publications Management Unit Supervisor, Preparedness



## Emergency Services Helps Texans Affected by Disasters



Throughout 2016, Mother Nature hit Texas hard enough for the federal government to declare four separate disasters, making Texans in 51 counties eligible for assistance. Much of that assistance was facilitated through Texas Health and Human Services Commission's (HHSC) Emergency Services Program (ESP), which supported 16,000 Texans last fiscal year.

The HHSC ESP provides financial help and case management to assist individuals rebuild their homes, replace personal property and recover from disasters. It also oversees distribution of water and ice to affected communities and helps Texans stranded abroad by emergencies. The Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) directs ESP to distribute water and ice in communities hit by disaster when those needs cannot be met by local government. Following the State of Texas Emergency Management Plan, the Emergency Water and Ice Program develops and maintains contracts so supplies are ready for any emergency.

"HHSC Emergency Services stands ready, day or night, to support residents of Texas during an emergency. We are on call 24/7," said ESP Program Director John Jackson. "We have several programs that can help people."

The Other Needs Assistance Program helps Texans who don't qualify for low-interest loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration and aren't insured. Funded largely by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), it processes grant applications from people affected by floods, hurricanes and tornadoes.

ESP also houses a Disaster Case Management Program that helps qualified clients develop a disaster recovery plan. With the help of a case manager, clients work through the steps of recovering from a disaster. "We work closely with survivors to help them navigate assistance systems and help them recover as quickly as possible," said ESP Disaster Case Management Operations Manager John Andoe.



*Emergency Services Program Training Specialist, Carol Greenslate, presenting an overview of the Disaster Case Management Program at the 2017 Regional Disaster Area Coordinators (RDAC) Conference held in Austin, Texas, July 11-12, 2017.*

When Texans overseas are affected by a disaster or threat, they can turn to ESP's Repatriation Program to get home safely. The program also works with International Social Services, a global child-protection

and social service network, to help people with disabilities and unaccompanied minors. Federally funded and administered by the state, ESP's Repatriation Program averages four to six repatriations a month.

To learn more about the ESP's services, email [John Jackson](mailto:John.Jackson@esp.state.tx.us).

Elicia Taylor  
Texas Health and Human Services Commission

## Texas Emergency Management Briefs, Tips and Links

### SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH July 13, 2017, FEMA

September 1 marks the start of National Preparedness Month, and serves as a reminder that we all must take action to prepare, now and throughout the year, for the types of emergencies that could affect us where we live, work, and visit. This year's theme, "Disasters Don't Plan Ahead. You Can." encourages everyone to make a plan, partner with neighbors and community, train to be a citizen responder and practice preparedness. Each week of National Preparedness Month has an individual focus:

Week 1: September 1 – 9  
Make a Plan for Yourself, Family and Friends

Week 2: September 10 - 16  
Plan to Help Your Neighbor and Community

Week 3: September 17 - 23  
Practice and Build Out Your Plans

Week 4: September 24 - 30  
Get Involved! Be a Part of Something Larger

#### [From FEMA](#)

#### **FAILED LEVEE REPAIR IN PORT ARTHUR TO COST \$10 MILLION**

By Angel San Juan, August 16, 2017, [kfdm.com](http://kfdm.com)





Jefferson County Drainage District 7 is in charge of the effort to repair and pay for a failed levee in Port Arthur.



The expected bill is \$10 million.

One commissioner worries it will deplete the drainage district's fund balance, leaving mid- and south-county vulnerable.

But the priority is getting the broken levee secure.

There's no time to waste. Workers are having to patch up a 200-foot stretch of the levee system that's protected the area for more than 40 years.

Someone fishing first discovered the damage a little more than two weeks ago. The cause of the levee breach - at least for now - remains unknown.

#### [From KFDM](#)

#### **KATY FIRE DEPARTMENT RECEIVES THANKS, PRAISE FOR ITS ACTIONS**

By Karen Zurawski, Houston Chronicle

Aug. 14 unofficially might be called Katy Fire Department's day.

The department received thanks and praise from Christine Reyna of Katyland for saving the life of her husband, Manuel; thanks for raising funds for Special Olympics Texas and a pat on the back for its successful application for a three-year staffing grant from the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency.



At the public comment portion of the Katy City Council meeting, Christine, with her husband by her side, told of the 911 call she made at 4 a.m. June 20 after her husband had what she thought was a heart attack. The EMS team "quickly responded," she said, taking her husband to Memorial Hermann Katy Hospital. After telling what happened and sharing the odds of successfully surviving a ruptured aneurism, she said, "Thank you from the bottom of our hearts."

#### [From Houston Chronicle](#)

#### **2017 Texas Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Conference**



Texas EMS invites you to their annual conference, November 19-22, 2017 at the Fort Worth Convention Center. Attend Texas EMS Conference 2017 and earn up to 15 hours of the

best education available! Choose from more than 100 lectures, hands-on workshops or preconference classes covering all the topics you want to know about!

For registration and conference agenda, visit the registration website.

### **DRAINAGE GRANT TO PROVIDE RELIEF FOR FAYSVILLE AREA**

By Naxiely Lopez-Puente, August 17, 2017, The Monitor

Hidalgo County received \$4.5 million from the state Thursday to continue the construction of the region's largest flood control project.

The Raymondville Drain is a 63-mile drainage project that will stretch through Hidalgo, Willacy and Cameron counties. The multi-phase project will take flood water beginning in Western Hidalgo County to the Laguna Madre.

The funding covers a portion of the project that will directly benefit residents in the Faysville area north of Edinburg by providing an outfall for flood waters, which has been a major concern for residents of the area for decades.

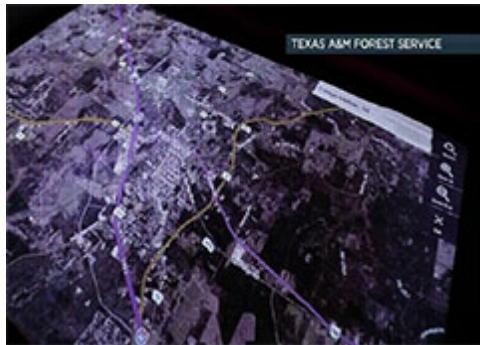


#### **[From The Monitor](#)**

### **AS CENTRAL TEXAS BATTLES WILDFIRES, AGENCIES TURN TO TECH TO TRAIN FIREFIGHTERS**

By Reena Diamante, August 21, 2017, Spectrum News

The dust from the Bastrop County wildfire over the weekend will settle and the smoke will clear, but the job is not over for the Texas A&M Forest Service.



Mitigation and prevention means being proactive and prepared. Now, new technology makes it easier for fire departments across the state.

Forest Service has several Simtables, a tool that uses data to projects images that simulate landscapes. Firefighters can then study past fires or create completely fictional ones, where variables like wind speed, vegetation, topography and number of emergency crews can all be changed.

#### **[From Spectrum News](#)**

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