



MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

Cold fronts, warm fronts, tornados, and floods – weather in Texas is never boring, and despite what our groundhog saw, some days seem like spring isn't too far away. As we mentioned last month, wildfires can emerge and grow quickly, and experts are anticipating what may be an especially active fire season. If the beginning of this year has been any indication, we may have our hands full with Mother

Nature this spring, but it's nothing Texans can't handle.



ACTIVE WILDFIRE SEASON POSSIBLE

Experts from Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS) are predicting a busy wildfire season is possible for parts of Texas this winter and spring. "There is a specific recipe to produce a wildland fire on the grass dominant Plains of Texas this time of year," said Fire Analyst Brad Smith. "You need an

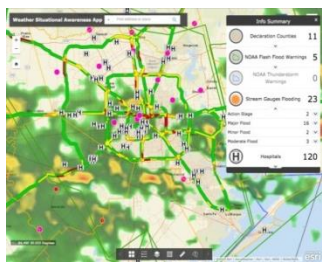
abundant crop of cured grass sitting on the landscape and a strong dry cold front to sweep across the state."



HEADS UP: CONCUSSIONS

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that affects your brain function. Effects are usually temporary but can include headaches and problems with concentration, memory, balance and coordination. Concussions are usually caused by a blow to the head. Violently shaking the head and upper body also can cause concussions. Some concussions cause you to lose consciousness, but most do not, so it's possible

to have a concussion and not realize it.



GIS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT WORKGROUP: A TEMAC ADVISORY GROUP

Geospatial information systems (GIS) map technology is utilized in Texas to support all aspects of emergency management. TDEM, several of the State Emergency Management Council agencies, and many local jurisdictions are using GIS to identify and map the location of people,

critical infrastructure and property at risk from disasters to better support all aspects of emergency management efforts.



TEXAS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT BRIEFS, TIPS AND LINKS

Find more information on events and resources for the emergency management community.



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Cold fronts, warm fronts, tornados, and floods – weather in Texas is never boring, and despite what our groundhog saw, some days seem like spring isn't too far away. As we mentioned last month, wildfires can emerge and grow quickly, and experts are anticipating what may be an especially active fire season. If the beginning of this year has been any indication, we may have our hands full with Mother Nature this spring, but it's nothing Texans can't handle.

As we saw in 2017, partnerships are more important now than ever. While focus on preparedness and mitigation efforts will be especially important as we continue recovery efforts, we must be mindful of the importance of collaboration and communication across all fronts. When speaking to community groups, I always emphasize the importance of working together. Numerous entities working separately from each other can create unintended conflicts or repetition, and it is essential to build relationships and mutual respect BEFORE disasters happen.

The upcoming Texas Emergency Management Conference is a unique opportunity for emergency managers, community members, and other stakeholders to learn more about what we're doing to keep Texas prepared, and perhaps more importantly, it provides an environment that promotes partnership, collaboration, and communication. We hope that you will join us this May as we continue to keep Texas strong. After all, we're #1!

Chief W. Nim Kidd, MPA, CEM[®], TEM[®]
Follow [@chiefkidd](https://twitter.com/chiefkidd) on Twitter

SAVE THE DATE: 2018 Texas Emergency Management Conference

TDEM will host the 2018 Texas Emergency Management Conference Tuesday, May 15 through Friday, May 18 at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center in San Antonio. Join us at this premier event, learn about what's happening in emergency management both in your community and statewide, and network with your colleagues from across the state. Visit the [2018 Texas Emergency Management Conference website](#) and stay tuned for more information.



Active wildfire season possible

Feb. — Experts from Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS) are predicting a busy wildfire season is possible for parts of Texas this winter and spring.

“There is a specific recipe to produce a wildland fire on the grass dominant Plains of Texas this time of year,” said Fire Analyst Brad Smith. “You need an abundant crop of cured grass sitting on the landscape and a strong dry cold front to sweep across the state.”



The rainfall that Texas received in the past year is actually what helped make fuel for wildfires to burn this winter.

“Above normal rainfall last summer and multiple hard freezes this winter have provided the first two ingredients,” said Smith. “February and March historically see the most frontal activity of the year. The strong winds and dry air that accompany these fronts is the ingredient that triggers wildland fire occurrence in the abundant cured grass.”

TFS is monitoring the situation closely and will be working with local response departments as we preposition state resources, including continued staffing of Single Engine Air Tanker bases in Amarillo and a large jet air tanker stationed in Abilene.

“The 2018 dormant fire season is shaping up to be a busy one for a very large part of the state,” said Smith.

By Phillip Truitt, Texas A&M Forest Service

To view a wildfire weather webinar, visit <https://youtu.be/DZvCd6g--ak>



Heads Up: Concussions

Concussion Overview

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that affects your brain function. Effects are usually temporary but can include headaches and problems with concentration,



memory, balance and coordination. Concussions are usually caused by a blow to the head. Violently shaking the head and upper body also can cause concussions. Some concussions cause you to lose consciousness, but most do not, so it's possible to have a concussion and not realize it. Concussions are particularly

common if you play a contact sport, such as football. Most people usually recover fully after a concussion.

Causes of Concussions

Your brain has the consistency of gelatin. It's cushioned from everyday jolts and bumps by cerebrospinal fluid inside your skull. A violent blow to your head and neck or upper body can cause your brain to slide back and forth forcefully against the inner walls of your skull. Sudden acceleration or deceleration of the head, caused by events such as a car crash or being violently shaken, also can cause brain injury.

These injuries affect brain function, usually for a brief period, resulting in signs and symptoms of concussion. This type of brain injury may lead to bleeding in or around your brain, causing symptoms such as prolonged drowsiness and confusion. These symptoms may develop immediately or later.

Such bleeding in your brain can be fatal – that's why anyone who experiences a brain injury needs monitoring in the hours afterward and emergency care if symptoms worsen.

Symptoms

The signs and symptoms of a concussion can be subtle and may not show up immediately. Symptoms can last for days, weeks or even longer. Common symptoms after a concussive traumatic brain injury are headache, loss of memory (amnesia) and confusion. The amnesia usually involves forgetting the event that caused the concussion.

Signs and symptoms of a concussion may include:



- Headache or a feeling of pressure in the head
- Temporary loss of consciousness
- Confusion or feeling as if in a fog
- Amnesia surrounding the traumatic event
- Dizziness or "seeing stars"
- Ringing in the ears
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Slurred speech
- Delayed response to questions
- Appearing dazed
- Fatigue

You may have some symptoms of concussions immediately. Others may be delayed for hours or days after injury, such as:

- Concentration and memory complaints
- Irritability and other personality changes
- Sensitivity to light and noise
- Sleep disturbances
- Psychological adjustment problems and depression
- Disorders of taste and smell
- Symptoms in children

Head trauma is very common in young children. But concussions can be difficult to recognize in infants and toddlers because they can't describe how they feel.

Concussion clues may include:

- Appearing dazed
- Listlessness and tiring easily
- Irritability and crankiness
- Loss of balance and unsteady walking
- Crying excessively
- Change in eating or sleeping patterns
- Lack of interest in favorite toys

Seek emergency care for an adult or child who experiences a head injury and symptoms such as:

- Repeated vomiting
- A loss of consciousness lasting longer than 30 seconds
- A headache that gets worse over time





- Changes in his or her behavior, such as irritability
- Changes in physical coordination, such as stumbling or clumsiness
- Confusion or disorientation, such as difficulty recognizing people or places
- Slurred speech or other changes in speech
- Other symptoms include:
 - Seizures
 - Vision or eye disturbances, such as pupils that are bigger than normal (dilated pupils) or pupils of unequal sizes
 - Lasting or recurrent dizziness
 - Obvious difficulty with mental function or physical coordination
 - Symptoms that worsen over time
 - Large head bumps or bruises on areas other than the forehead in children, especially in infants under 12 months of age

By Jason Dush, Texas Division of Emergency Management

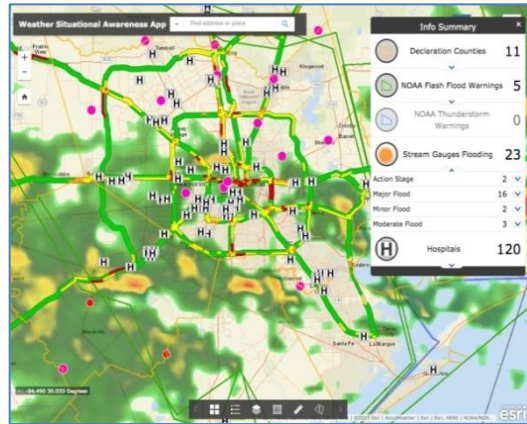
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GIS Emergency Management Workgroup: A TEMAC Advisory Group

Geospatial information systems (GIS) map technology is utilized in Texas to support all aspects of emergency management. TDEM, several of the State Emergency Management Council agencies, and many local jurisdictions are using GIS to identify and map the location of people, critical infrastructure and property at risk from disasters to better support all aspects of emergency management efforts.



The Texas Emergency Management Advisory Committee (TEMAC) added the **GIS Emergency Management Workgroup** as an advisory group in late 2015 to provide a forum for State and Federal agencies and local jurisdictions to recommend development priorities, best practices and standards for the use of GIS technology for emergency management and to collaborate and share GIS data and services.

Jeff Newbold, State Coordinator for Critical Information Systems (CIS) noted that *"during Hurricane Harvey, there was a continuous need for GIS mapping technology to depict hurricane wind and flood impacts to Texas citizens and to map the location and status of support services, such as evacuation buses, shelters, warehouses and points of distribution. Our next step is to connect the TDEM GIS system to our crisis management system to provide the most accurate and up to date information as feasible."*



Texas Governor Greg Abbott and TDEM Chief Nim Kidd flying over the Canton Tornado incident on April 30, 2017, with GIS map in hand.

[Michael Quimet](#), Manager for the TDEM Critical Information Systems, Headquarters Group, commented that *"the long-term goal is to ensure that the State and its local, regional and federal partners are working from the same GIS map data and common operating picture and that data are distributed in near real time to everyone that requires it for their respective emergency management missions. The **GIS Emergency Management Workgroup** will be an invaluable venue for the emergency management community to discuss how to make this vision a reality. The target audience for the workgroup is geospatial professionals who directly support*

emergency management activities in Texas or support groups that are developing related data and services."



The next **GIS Emergency Management Workgroup** meeting will be held in conjunction with the TEMAC meeting at the [2018 Emergency Management Association of Texas \(EMAT\) Symposium](#) in San Marcos on March 6th from 9:45 – 11AM at the Embassy Suites Hotel and Convention Center. For more information or to be added to the workgroup email distribution list, send an email to support@soc.texas.gov with **GIS Emergency Management Workgroup** in the subject line and your full contact information.

By Michael Ouimet, Texas Division of Emergency Management



TEXAS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT BRIEFS, TIPS AND LINKS

Officials ask for help before next hurricane season By Marina Riker, Feb. 20, 2018

Local government officials from coastal communities battered by Hurricane Harvey voiced anxieties and frustrations about the recovery process - and the fact that hurricane season is only three months away - to a Texas House subcommittee Tuesday.

Just days before the six-month anniversary of the devastating hurricane, the Texas House Appropriations Subcommittee on Disaster Impact and Recovery met in Victoria, where mayors and county leaders shared lists of projects needed to be undertaken so communities would be protected from future storms.

From [Victoria Advocate](#)

Community invited to learn more about local law enforcement in 9-week academy By Jacqueline Loera, February 19, 2018

EL PASO, Texas (KFOX14/CBS4) — People interested to see how law enforcement protects the community will have the chance to with the Citizen’s Academy, held by the El Paso Police Department, and The Texas Department of Public Safety.

The Citizens Academy is a nine-week academy that will give students hands on experience on many programs and services provided by law enforcement, and educate them about safety challenges people face daily. A spokesman for the police department says this year they’ll focus on border operations, K-9 units, crash investigations, criminal investigations, patrol procedures, SWAT, the crime lab, aircraft operation, and an overview of use of force topics.

The academy starts March 20.

From [KFOX](#)





Hazard mitigation funding for Harvey recovery becomes available
By Ed Sterling, February 18, 2018

AUSTIN — Gov. Greg Abbott traveled to Rockport and Houston on Feb. 13 to announce the availability of new funding for hazard mitigation projects along the Gulf Coast following the devastation of Hurricane Harvey.

Abbott invited cities and counties to submit applications for projects and said the funding would provide an estimated \$1 billion for hazard and flood mitigation projects designed to both help Texas rebuild and reduce the risk of future damage from flooding and Hurricanes.

The funding, to be administered by the Texas Division of Emergency Management, can be used for:

- Buyouts and elevations of flood prone properties;
- Drainage and reservoir projects that eliminate future flooding;
- Projects to lessen the frequency or severity of flooding;
- Flood risk reduction projects such as dams, retention basins, levees, floodwalls; and
- Large-scale channeling of waterways.

From [Sealy News](#)

FEMA: Texas cities still getting federal aid six months after Hurricane Harvey
By Alexandria Rodriguez, February 21, 2018

Six months ago Sunday, Hurricane Harvey made landfall on the Texas coast.



After the Category 4 hurricane devastated coastal cities including, Rockport, Port Aransas and Aransas Pass, those affected quickly began to pick up the pieces and started on the road to recovery.

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, hundreds of thousands of homeowners have begun making necessary repairs to their homes or have found new apartments or homes.

From [the Caller Times](#)



After Florida school shooting, Gov. Abbott plans to name-and-shame potentially unprepared Texas districts
By Lauren McGaughy & Eva-Marie Ayala, February 21, 2018

AUSTIN — One week after a gunman killed 17 people at a Florida high school, Gov. Greg Abbott says he wants to publish the names of Texas school districts that haven't completed state-mandated safety checks.



"All of Texas grieves the tragedy that occurred in Parkland last week," Abbott said in a prepared statement Wednesday.

"Immediate steps must be taken to keep our students and

communities safe, with the understanding that more will be expected in the future."

Education Commissioner Mike Morath issued a statement saying he's directed Texas Education Agency staff to begin full implementation of Abbott's directives. "Our schools must always be a safe place for learning. Governor Abbott has identified specific steps that can help strengthen campus safety for all students," Morath said.

From [the Dallas News](#)

Area entities want local control over 911 services
By Jimmy Daniell Isaac, February 20, 2018

Authorities are citing local control of 911 addressing among the reasons why they want to take over operation of area emergency services from the state.

The East Texas Council of Governments has been tapped as the primary planning and coordinating entity for emergency communications in Northeast Texas. The agency is working with state and local officials to have fully deployed advanced 911 service for wireless callers and to help plan for future 911 services.

The Gregg County Commissioners Court approved a resolution this week to create the Piney Woods 911 District, a regional emergency communications district serving residents in at least eight Northeast Texas counties and 23 cities.

The state's Regional Emergency Communications District Act requires the governing bodies of each participating county and city in the region to adopt a resolution that approves creation of the 911 district.

From the [Longview News Journal](#)



Texas clinics flooded with “tsunami” of flu patients — and the season may not have peaked yet
By Marissa Evans, February 21, 2018

The staff at Project Vida Health Center have been taking waves of flu patients and haven’t been able to come up for air.

Bill Schlesinger, CEO for the community health center in El Paso, said the flu has caused a “significant take down” of his own staff members, with between 20 and 30 percent of them getting the flu even after being vaccinated. They’ve had to fill in where they can with people covering shifts, working longer hours and not taking time off.



“Remember the videos of the tsunami in Japan and it just kept coming? It was just like that,” Schlesinger said.

Health providers across Texas have been battling a severe flu season that is sending thousands of patients to doctors' offices and hospital emergency rooms. More than 4,000 Texans have died so far from flu-related illnesses this season, according to the Texas Department of State Health Services. Texas is one of 43 states reporting high flu activity, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Walgreens’ flu index reports that four Texas cities — Dallas, El Paso, Tyler and Waco — are among the top 10 spots on the nationwide list of areas with the highest flu activity. The list is created using retail prescription data about flu medication bought from nationwide Walgreens.

It's hard to know at this point how the season compares to previous years because the season can peak anywhere between December and March, said Lara Anton, a press officer for the Texas Department of State Health Services. Last year 9,553 Texans died from flu-related illnesses.

From [the Texas Tribune](#)