MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF
We mention the weather often in TEMO, and rightfully so considering what it throws at us. 2017 presented Texas with Hurricane Harvey, followed by drought, and then one of the warmest winters in a long time. So far this year, we’ve had one severe weather event after another along with a very long, hot summer accompanied by multiple flooding events over the course of several months.

WINTER WEATHER PREPAREDNESS IN THE WORKPLACE
Texas may be known for record summer heat and active hurricane seasons, however ice storms, snow storms and blizzards, while not as common, can and often do occur in parts of the state resulting in significant impact to affected communities. Severe winter weather can also cripple industries and endanger life.

SLOW YOUR ROLL, PUT DOWN THE PHONE AND END HIGHWAY FATALITIES
To claim that the number of fatalities on Texas roads this year is beyond tragic is an understatement – at the time of this writing more than 2,787 people have died in motor vehicle crashes so far in 2018. In other words, thousands of moms, dads, sons and daughters, siblings, coworkers, friends and family, to include the most precious among us...

FLU SAFETY STEPS FOR THE WORKPLACE
Most of the country is seeing a widespread outbreak of the flu and the American Red Cross urges people who have not yet gotten a flu vaccine to try to get their vaccination now. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone six months of age and older. Those with chronic conditions like pulmonary and cardiovascular illness, residents of nursing homes and other facilities...

TEXAS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT RELATED BRIEFS, TIPS AND LINKS
Additional information on events and resources for the emergency management community.
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As cooler weather sets in, November tends to feel more like the fall season so hopefully it will increase everyone’s interest in cold weather preparation. The ideal time to prepare is now, especially as much of the state continues to assess and recover from major flooding. Winter weather creates dangerous conditions; conditions that will impact numerous aspects of our lives from participating in holiday festivities to our dependence on critical infrastructure, i.e. gas/electricity, water, and communication networks. The recent boil water notices impacting several counties last month reminded many Texans just how dependent we are on basic needs and the service utilities that provide them.

November is also a time when socializing is likely to increase. Be aware when driving from place to place that others on the road may not be as careful as you. Distracted driving is as prevalent as ever, often defying basic common sense. Traffic accidents are a public health and safety issue so please read on to see how each one of us can make a difference in reducing highway vehicle crashes and fatalities.

Got your flu shot yet? Influenza can be a deadly illness. The CDC recommends a flu shot for everyone over six months of age. And they recommend doing it early. There really are no excuses for not getting a flu shot; pharmacies and clinics all over the state welcome walk-ins for shots at little or no cost or wait. While you’re on your way to your favorite grocery store or home improvement center to get supplies for your emergency kit, pop in and get your shot! Please also continue to the article on Flu as it pertains to the workplace.

As a reminder, the 2018 Texas EMS Conference is right around the corner on November 18-21, 2018 at the Fort Worth Convention Center. Find out more about the largest emergency medical services conference in the country and how to register here: Texas EMS Conference Registration.

Chief W. Nim Kidd, CEM®
Follow @chiefkidd on Twitter
WINTER WEATHER PREPAREDNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Texas may be known for record summer heat and active hurricane and tornado seasons, however ice storms, snow storms and blizzards, while not as common, can and often do occur in parts of the state resulting in significant impact to affected communities. Severe winter weather can also cripple industries and endanger life. The Texas Panhandle, West Texas and North Texas are more prone to classic winter conditions but Houston and even the Rio Grande Valley have also experienced severe winter weather patterns. The recent heavy rainfall across the state has once again demonstrated that maintaining a safety mindset is required under any weather conditions. With most of the rain behind us (for now), it’s a good time to inspect and conduct any structural maintenance needed before winter sets in. The safety of those who work outside and the need for preservation of exposed equipment during winter should be obvious. As temperatures drop, freezing and expansion begins and equipment is more at risk. Proper winterization of facilities is a safeguard that can protect people and infrastructure alike.

In November 2014, a sequence of events brought on by cold weather at a pesticide plant in La Porte, Texas resulted in disaster. Previously known issues with a pipe blockage resulted in a plan of spraying hot water onto the pipes to prevent solids from forming. However, not realizing that blockages had been cleared and that liquid was flowing, two workers were overcome and killed by toxic vapor. Two more workers died responding to the distress call.

The La Porte example revealed several issues, however a thorough inspection of equipment and proper winterization may have prevented the deadly outcome. It is the responsibility of companies to heed warnings, take corrective action and plan for the long-term maintenance of equipment while updating policies and procedures on a regular basis. A proactive approach means tending to safety issues before regulatory agencies get involved or more importantly, before a disaster occurs.

Situations like ice blockages in pipes can be subtle and unseen. Others are more obvious and usually preventable per the following examples:

- Unhealthy temperatures in facilities
- Assigning people to dangerous positions, such as on icy roofs or unsafe platforms
- Bacteria and mold growth
- Poor air quality
- Working in hazardous environments without the proper personal protective equipment (PPE)

Winterization strategies should include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Complete system checkups, testing controls, and water testing
- Cleaning, disinfection, and passivation (coating) of open systems
- Insulating and use of heating trace pipes and sprinklers
- Introducing anti-freeze to systems that are exposed to the cold
- Scheduling annual heating, ventilation & air conditioning (HVAC) maintenance
- Weather stripping doors and windows

Managers and supervisors should ensure they have basic winter safety plans that include:

- Arrangements for shoveling, sweeping and clearing walkways
- A comprehensive list of available snow and ice removal equipment at the facility (deicer, shovels, brooms, waterproof floor mats, plows),
- A list of the supervisors responsible for the equipment and the priority of service in emergency conditions, location of equipment, and contractors who provide winter services
- A weather communications plan for extreme conditions, such as wind, low temperatures, heavy rain, sleet, drifting snow and ice. The plan should include procedures for communication between supervisors, crews and contractors, clearly outlining the responsibility of all parties
- A manpower plan for situations requiring emergency response
- Inspection procedures on agency vehicles for safe winter operations, scheduled maintenance and winterization
- Safety meetings for all drivers of agency vehicles on safe winter operating rules and expectations

Employees should be encouraged to discuss winter weather concerns with supervision. Employees should take full responsibility for:

- Attending safety meetings or taking appropriate training
- Following winter safety guidelines and rules
- Wearing the appropriate clothing for inclement weather if a job involves outdoor work
- Performing a full inspection of vehicles and safety equipment on agency vehicles before operation

Finally, it is important to stay prepared and check in with your local National Weather Service office for current conditions and winter weather forecasts. Facility managers have their hands full ensuring a clean, safe and habitable indoor and outdoor work environment, and educating employees on the various aspects of handling daily operations for emergency situations. With proper prior planning (3 Ps), this task is achievable under even the most extreme weather conditions.
**Slow Your Roll, Put Down the Phone and End the Streak of Highway Fatalities**

To claim that the number of fatalities on Texas roads this year is beyond tragic is an understatement – at the time of this writing more than 2,787 people have died in motor vehicle crashes so far in 2018. In other words, thousands of moms, dads, sons and daughters, siblings, coworkers, friends and family, to include the most precious among us – children, started their daily routine never to return home due to being killed in a motor vehicle crash. While this figure is staggering, read on to understand how we can all make a difference.

Most crashes don’t just happen. They are caused by a variety of factors, most of which involve human error, which is why local officials prefer to not call them “accidents.” Operating an unsafe vehicle on a public road obviously increases the risk of being in a crash, however this article primarily addresses those factors most associated with preventable distracted driving. Activities that may divert the driver’s attention such as talking or texting on a phone, eating or drinking, talking with passengers, applying cosmetics or fiddling with the entertainment system are some examples of behaviors that constitute distracted driving. Other behaviors that may detract from the safe operation of a motor vehicle like excessive speeding, tailgating, erratic or unsafe lane changes, not compensating for poor road conditions or poor visibility, falling asleep at the wheel, and last but not least, driving under the influence can be equally deadly.

Regardless of the distraction, a person cannot drive safely unless the task of driving has their full, undivided attention. This includes keeping anger and frustration toward fellow motorists in check even under the most stressful traffic conditions. For drivers who consider their travel plans more important than others, the few seconds or minutes conceivably saved by aggressively darting in and out of traffic, passing at unsafe speeds, tailgating or otherwise being inconsiderate to fellow motorists never outweighs the risk of causing or contributing to a catastrophic crash.

While text-messaging has become one of the most common forms of communication, it has also become one of the most dangerous distractions. Sending or reading a text message while driving can cause the average driver to take their eyes off of the road for up to five seconds or more. At 55 mph, that's like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed.

Road conditions in Texas contribute to an even more challenging environment due to the more than 2,500 active work zones on state roads at any given time. Motorists traveling along I-35, for example encounter many of the state’s work zones. These areas are hazardous for both workers and motorists who drive through the complex array of signs, barrels and lane changes required for construction. It is especially important to remain alert and to obey speed limits, caution and warning signs and other potential hazards while driving through these areas. Additionally, when travelling through work zones remember to slow down or move over for flashing lights, law enforcement vehicles, emergency vehicles, tow
trucks or Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) vehicles that may be stopped along the side of the road.

The U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recently announced that highway fatality numbers were down in 2017 following two consecutive years of large increases. Although this is welcome news for the country as a whole, unfortunately for Texans, the number of fatal car crashes for 2018 continues to be on par with previous years. In fact, Texas records over 3,000 traffic fatalities a year. Since the year 2000, more than 66,000 Texans have died on state roads. At least one death per day has occurred on Texas roads for the past 18 years. On the anniversary of this tragic statistic, TxDOT will be kicking off its annual #EndTheStreakTX campaign later this month to raise much-needed awareness and to possibly put an end to the deadly streak.

To decrease the chances of roadway crashes and fatalities, TxDOT reminds drivers to:

- Be courteous to other drivers
- Always buckle up; all riders, day and night
- Pay attention, focus on driving when behind the wheel, put the phone away or turn it off
- Drive to conditions, slow down when weather conditions are bad
- Stop for all stop signs and red lights
- Stop for all school busses with stop signs and flashing lights
- Pull over for emergency first responder vehicles with flashing lights and/or sirens
- Pass carefully when it’s legal and safe
- Use caution when driving through areas with pedestrian crosswalks, railroad crossings, wildlife and animal crossing signs
The National Highway Safety Authority further recommends all drivers/passengers:

- Be good role models for young drivers and set a good example. Talk with your teens about responsible driving.
- Speak up when you are a passenger and your driver uses an electronic device while driving. Offer to make the call for the driver, so his or her full attention stays on the driving task.
- Always wear your seat belt. Seat belts are the best defense against unsafe drivers.
- Never drive after drinking alcohol or consuming other drugs or medications that cause drowsiness. (A recent study conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and the Highway Loss Data Institute reports that highway crashes are 6% higher in states that have legalized marijuana.)

Additionally, for Texans who always seem to be in a hurry and can’t slow down, it’s always best to avoid letting traffic conditions cloud your judgement. Slow your roll, plan your departure earlier and always factor in potential delays due to traffic, road work or other conditions. The few seconds or minutes potentially saved by aggressive or erratic driving behaviors are never worth the risk of causing a catastrophic vehicle crash with fatalities – especially your own. Let’s all make a better effort to end highway fatalities by paying more attention to the road, slowing down and being considerate of fellow motorists and pedestrians.

For more information, please visit:

End The Streak
What is distracted driving?
U.S. DOT Announces 2017 Roadway Fatalities Down

FLU SAFETY STEPS FOR THE WORKPLACE

Stay Home If You Are Sick
Most of the country is seeing a widespread outbreak of the flu and the American Red Cross urges people who have not yet gotten a flu vaccine to try to get their vaccination now.

Who Should Get Flu Vaccine?
The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends a yearly flu vaccine for everyone six months of age and older. Those with chronic conditions like pulmonary and cardiovascular illness, residents of nursing homes and other facilities and those with many other medical conditions are especially urged to get a flu shot. Full details are available on the CDC web site.
“Flu season doesn’t peak until late January or February and can last until May, so it is not too late to get a flu vaccine,” said Dr. Richard Benjamin, Chief Medical Director for the Red Cross. “It takes about two weeks for the flu vaccine to provide full protection, so the sooner someone gets vaccinated, the sooner they will be fully protected.”

**Workplace Safety Steps**
The best step someone can take to prevent the spread of flu in their workplace is to get vaccinated. If someone is sick with fever and respiratory symptoms, they should stay at home until 24 hours after their fever is gone without taking medicine. Other steps workers can take include:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water aren’t available
- Avoid touching the nose, mouth and eyes
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or cough and sneeze into your upper sleeve. Dispose of tissues. Clean hands after coughing, sneezing or blowing one’s nose
- Keep common surfaces people touch clean, such as telephones and computer equipment
- Don’t use a co-worker’s phone, desk, computer or other tools
- Avoid shaking hands or coming in close contact with co-workers who may be ill

**Signs Of The Flu**
How does someone know they have the flu? The common signs of influenza are high fever, severe body aches, headache, being extremely tired, sore throat, cough, runny or stuffy nose, and vomiting and/or diarrhea (which are more common in children).

**Call The Doctor**
If you think you have the flu, your health-care provider should be consulted. Seek medical care immediately if you develop any of the following symptoms:

- Fast breathing, trouble breathing or bluish skin color
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen (adults)
- Confusion or sudden dizziness
- Not drinking enough fluids, not being able to eat, or severe or persistent vomiting
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with fever and worse cough
- Not waking up, being so irritable that the child does not want to be held or not interacting (children)
- Fever with a rash (children)
- No tears when crying or significantly fewer wet diapers than normal (children)

You can find more information about how to help keep you and your loved ones protected by visiting [American Red Cross Flu Safety](#).

**TEXAS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT BRIEFS, TIPS AND LINKS**

**Fire Risk Mitigation is a Never-Ending Challenge for Utilities**
Published September 19, 2018 by David Shadle

Fire is as old as time, and while we have conquered it in countless ways, it still has a habit of showing up unannounced and unwanted. Nowhere is this more evident than in areas of the Western United States, which see numerous wildfires every year that claim lives and millions of dollars in property. Unfortunately, fires that can be caused by and/or destroy utility infrastructure occur in other parts of the U.S. as well. So, are there tools and practices available to help utilities protect their equipment from wildfires and to help minimize the occurrence of power equipment caused fires?

The answer is definitely yes. In states with hot, dry periods where long expanses of transmission and distribution lines may cross high-fuel environments containing dry grass, brush and forested areas, utilities are increasingly turning to granular herbicides to create vegetation-free zones that act as a fire-break to protect their equipment. According to Paul Escobar with SSI Maxim Company, a reduced vegetation zone creates a defensible space where heat and flame exposure to equipment is reduced. Moreover, granular herbicides can be applied around structures with a broadcast spreader and they protect an area for months. Creating a reduced vegetation zone in the vicinity of distribution equipment like pole mounted transformers or capacitors also helps minimize the creation of a fire should an errant spark occur.

In recent years, utilities across the country have been taking steps to increase reliability and resiliency after a series of major storm events caused major outages. For example, CenterPoint Energy developed a hazard tree inspection program after Hurricane Ike in 2008 to periodically inspect important circuits thought to be potentially at risk due to the presence of certain danger trees including palm and pine species. Unitel implemented a vegetation storm resiliency program (SRP) after experiencing a series of extreme weather events and realizing
that standard vegetation management practices may provide insufficient protection from extreme events. The SRP goes beyond the company’s traditional core vegetation management program consisting of cyclical pruning and hazard tree removal by conducting detailed tree risk assessment on critical circuits to remove all failure risks and ensure ground-to-sky clearance. Not surprisingly, the storm hardening practices conducted by both utilities also serve to help minimize the risk of fires resulting from vegetation caused equipment damage.

According to Scott Holmquist with Pursue It Consulting, utility companies are increasingly focusing on developing effective wildfire mitigation, vegetation management and pre-treatment programs to minimize losses. Scott’s experience has been that fire retardants in the Long-Term Fire Retardant (LTR) classification have proven to be highly effective for a variety of situations. They can be applied on and around flammable materials to reduce fire intensity, rate of spread and increases safety for those working on a fire line. In addition, LTRs can be applied several days prior to fire passage and remain effective for days and even weeks after application. Wooden poles treated with fire retardants experience greatly minimized damage compared to untreated equipment.

Some observers might argue that the billions of dollars utilities are pouring into smart grid technologies will put an end to electrical equipment related fires. After all, automation technologies can aid in fault location, isolation and restoration and there is no question that system resilience to extreme weather events is improved when equipment has the ability to detect and automatically limit the extent of major outages. However, utilities and researchers are learning that even smart grid enhanced systems are fallible and can be improved upon.

Pedernales Electric Cooperative and other Texas utilities are working with Texas A&M Engineering to address potential sensitivity gaps in some smart grid systems that should further reduce wildfire risks. The team is demonstrating a technology known as distribution fault anticipation (DFA) that was developed at Texas A&M University’s College of Engineering. The technology helps utilities detect multiple line issues that could lead to wildfires by utilizing sensitivity triggered, high fidelity waveform recorders positioned at substations on distribution circuits. An extensive database of collected waveform data has helped researchers identify the characteristics of various line events and develop algorithms to recognize and report them. As an example, the DFA system can help identify and isolate a recurrent fault that left uncorrected might lead to permanent damage and, potentially, a fire.

Ever-improving vegetation management practices, fire prevention/mitigation treatments and advanced technologies are contributing to improved electrical system reliability, resiliency and reductions in fire ignition risk. However, we can never drop our guard because nature, careless humans and malfunctioning equipment keep the risk of wildfires alive. Every additional measure we can implement that improves situational awareness and preparation further reduces the chances that a fire will lead to major losses.
Pet Safety Tips for Thanksgiving Weekend
Published October 5, 2018 by Tori Stafford

And so it begins... the festive holiday season! Awesome food, cooler weather, changing of leaves, and family gatherings. In all the bustle of the season, your pets can often get put off during the hectic happenings, and you want to make sure they stay safe.

Food – just say no! It may be tempting to let them have a nibble of turkey or other goodies from the table, but know that this can potentially make them quite ill. Pancreatitis may rear its ugly head and cause some intense vomiting or diarrhea, especially if eating anything greasy or fatty, or something unusual to their diet. If there’s a string around your turkey, beware of the cats getting a hold of it as it can lead to a nasty obstruction.

Crowds – anxiety through the roof! Maybe you have a social butterfly for a pet, but maybe you don’t. Louder noises, altered routines, strange or newer people in the house can be terrifying to some pets. You might not see your cat for a few days. Your dog may have accidents in the house or, if feeling excessively anxious, could even lash out with the unfamiliar events around them.

Travel – there’s no place like home. Home is likely the safest and happiest place for your pets. Yet, if you are traveling with them, follow a few simple tips:

- Large dogs in seat belt harnesses or crates and small dogs or cats in crates.
- Have enough medication in case you end up staying for a few days.
- Have a copy of their vaccine certificate in case you need to cross the border, or if you for some reason need to board them unexpectedly.
- If your pet is anxious or nauseous in the car, ask your veterinarian for some short acting, safe medication options that might help.

That’s the basics! If your pet does have a problem over the weekend, don’t hesitate to contact the nearest emergency clinic, because the morning after a holiday, your vet clinic can be jam packed and it may not be easy to get in. Additionally, the longer a sick pet waits, the worse a situation can get. Be safe, have fun, and relax with your pets during the holidays – they are part of your family!
Austin Water, City to review handling of historic boil water notice
Published October 29, 2018. By Chelsea Cunningham of KVUE-ABC

AUSTIN — Austin's unprecedented boil water notice may be over, but Austin Water, the city’s water utility company, and the City of Austin still have a lot of work to do over the next 10 to 14 days in the aftermath.

According to Austin City Manager Spencer Cronk, Austin Water will be performing system-wide operational checks, maintenance, plant cleanup and wash-down activities over the next two weeks.

Austin Water issued a precautionary boil water notice for its customers on Monday, Oct. 22 after admitting that floodwaters, filled with a significant amount of debris, from the Hill Country created challenges for the water treatment plants. The utility company failed to meet state standards for turbidity or water clarity levels on Oct. 23. But it wasn't until Oct. 28, six days after the initial notice was issued, that Austin Water rescinded the boil water notice for customers.

Now, Cronk said there's more work to do for Austin Water. Cronk said the utility company is set to conduct its own in-depth review of their operations, which will include an analysis of the raw water factors that contributed to the boil water notice. Austin Water will also be in touch with the Lower Colorado River Authority, which has been conducting flood operations at the Mansfield Dam for the past two weeks, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, outside engineering firms and water treatment experts. Cronk said Austin Water will emphasize in the report on how to improve and strengthen the drinking water system’s response to raw water.


Do we rely too much on our car's technology?
Published 2018 by Elissa Rivas on ABC13.com

You've invested in a vehicle with the latest technology, such as blind spot monitoring, forward collision warning and lane-keeping assist, but could relying too much on this technology put you and the drivers around you in danger?
The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety talked to drivers about what's known as Advanced Driver Assistance Systems.

For example, AAA Foundation says 80 percent of drivers with blind spot monitoring didn't know that their system would only detect vehicles traveling specific speeds, and may not detect someone walking or cycling.

Even more concerning, about a quarter of drivers surveyed said they felt comfortable engaging in other tasks while driving as they relied on some of the newest technology features.

"It has great potential to save a number of lives and reduce the number of accidents on our roadways, but really it is the driver's responsibility to understand what the technology's capabilities are and what the limitations are as well," said AAA spokesperson Joshua Zuber.

So what can you do to ensure a safe drive?

ASK FOR DEMONSTRATIONS AT THE DEALERSHIP
Ideally, ask specifically about safety features while you're taking a test drive, but you can also set an appointment to do so once you purchase.

CHECK THE OWNER'S MANUAL
Just like it shows you how to change the clock on the radio, it should also give you the specifics on your safety systems.

SEARCH ONLINE
If reading a manual is not for you, websites like YouTube often feature helpful video tutorials that will show you exactly what you need to know.


How Wily Texas Congressman Helped Protect Austin From Flooding
Published Oct 18, 2018 by Asher Price

Because the Colorado River and its tributaries — the Llano, San Saba and Pedernales rivers, among other waterways — are located in a semi-arid region sometimes host to heavy rain, Central Texas is often described as flash-flood alley.
More than 80 floods have been recorded in the lower Colorado River basin since the mid-1800s. For years, Austinites braced themselves for massive floods that overwhelmed the river’s banks.

The Legislature created the Lower Colorado River Authority in 1934 to control flooding, charging the utility with providing energy, water and community services. But the backstory to the dams that remade the Colorado River and remain the LCRA’s signature achievement have everything to do with a young, wily Hill Country congressman named Lyndon Baines Johnson. Johnson, first elected in 1937, more than a quarter century before he became president, had made rural electrification a chief campaign promise, and he saw the dams as a way to make good on it. The ability to generate electricity and dole out water brought enormous political clout, but required political favors to achieve: Nearly every dam and lake in the six-lake chain is named for some 20th-century political figure.

To get millions in federal help during the Depression, early LCRA organizers offered to name a dam after U.S. Rep. James Buchanan. D-Brenham, who happened to chair the U.S. House Appropriations Committee, key to approving President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal programs. In June 1936, Buchanan met with Roosevelt and told him, according to Robert Caro in "The Path to Power," the first volume of his famous LBJ biography: “Mr. President, I want a birthday present.’ ‘What do you want, Buck?’ Roosevelt is said to have replied. ‘My dam,’ Buchanan is said to have answered. ‘Well then, I guess we’d better give it to you, Buck,’ the President is said to have replied; picking up the telephone, he gave Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes the necessary order.”

Mansfield Dam was named in 1941 for Joseph Mansfield, the Democratic congressman from Eagle Lake who chaired the U.S. House Committee on Rivers and Harbors, serving as an important ally in making sure the Central Texas infrastructure projects were a priority.

Today, LCRA dams still generate hydroelectricity, but the vast majority of the electricity generated by the nonprofit utility comes from the coal- and gas-fired power plants it controls. But they still operate as key components for flood control. The system is “designed and built to do the job of protecting Austin and downstream communities from the kind of catastrophic flooding we’ve seen over the course of the last few weeks,” John Hofmann, who oversees water operations for the LCRA, said Thursday.
As devastating as the floods have been in parts of the basin — historic flooding in Llano this week, for example — there is precedent. The Christmas Flood of 1991, triggered by a series of storms that fell on already-saturated ground throughout the basin, pushed Lake Travis to rise to an all-time high of 710.44 feet above mean sea level, fewer than four feet below the Mansfield Dam spillway.

Five floodgates were opened — four were opened Tuesday — as a pressure valve to release water from the Highland Lakes. Flooding was reported downriver, as water rushed toward the Gulf of Mexico, but the widespread devastation that characterized the Colorado as late as 1935, when floodwater caused the river to crest at 50 feet, washing out the Congress Avenue Bridge — did not take place. And in 2007, when widespread rains brought an end to a brutal drought and the Highland Lakes functioned like the great holding tanks they were designed to be, then-General Manager Joe Beal described the performance of Lake Travis, the primary flood control lake, succinctly: It’s “doing just what it’s supposed to do,” he said.