



# TEXAS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

ONLINE

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Texas Division of Emergency Management is accepting article submissions for The Texas Emergency Management Online (TEMO) newsletter. If you have an idea for a topic or would like to submit an article, contact [Mike Jones](#) at 512-424-7050.



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

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(Houston, TX) – Harris County, one of the fastest growing counties in the nation has a new, state-of-the-art Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to help local governments and emergency responders serve and protect residents during disasters and emergencies. Harris County is the third largest county in the United States and the largest in Texas. It has 34 cities and more than 4.4 million residents.

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## **Texas Department of Public Safety ECA and CPR Training**

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

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

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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

I am one of the few members of my family that actually doesn't scream and run at the sight of bugs (Sorry, Garrett. ...just kidding, he really isn't afraid of bugs, well not much.) ☺

I am however the biggest wimp I know of when it comes to needles...I hate them! (Which makes for some interesting conversations with my physician wife.) And, in case you haven't noticed, more and more we are being bombarded with attacks, hacks, and creepy intrusions to our technology and personal communication devices.

Bugs, needles, and viruses are all topics in this month's issue.  
#AreYouReady?



### Flu Season

October marks the beginning of flu season. Each year in Texas and the US, influenza develops into a wide-spread and dangerous epidemic. And each year thousands of people in the US die from flu-related illness. Texans are not immune.

The Centers for Disease Control recommends that everyone over six months old get a flu shot yearly, and get it early. It is the single, most important step you can take to protect yourself from this serious disease. Unimmunized people not only risk getting the flu, they also risk spreading the disease among everyone they come in contact with. You can find vaccination locations [here](#).

Every flu season is different, and flu viruses are constantly changing. So it's not unusual for new strains to appear from season to season. For example, in 2009, H1N1 "swine flu" appeared in the US. This virus originally jumped to humans from pigs, and people who are around pigs were the only ones vulnerable. But the virus changed in ways that made it possible to pass from human to human. Although flu vaccines have to be "tweaked" periodically, they are formulated to prevent the seasonal viruses that circulate among people today: H1N1, H3N2, and influenza B.

Other steps you can take to protect yourself from the flu:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick;
- Wash your hands often;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth; and
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that can become contaminated with germs.
- If you get sick, stay home from work or school to help prevent spreading the disease. If you must go out, avoid close contact with other people, and cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing. The Texas Department of State Health Services also recommends that you have a plan to care for sick family members at home.

## **MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF continued ...**

### **Speaking of bugs ...**

Did you know that October is National Cyber Security Awareness Month? With all the high-profile data breaches in the news recently, perhaps you should! Identity theft can be a debilitating crime that can take years to resolve. As a nation, we face constant threats to our critical infrastructure and economy.



During National Cyber Security Awareness Month, a number of resources are available to help you, your family, and your business increase your resiliency to cybercrime. You can also get involved and help spread the word about cyber security. You can post safety tips and reminders on your social networks; include cyber security in your blogs; talk to your family about securing all your household devices; and insert NCSAM icons on your Facebook page and email signature. Look for local events in your area that help you protect yourself and spread the word about cyber security.

Links:

[Centers for Disease Control - Influenza](#)

[Texas Department of State Health Services - 2014-2015 Flu Season](#)

[US Department of Homeland Security - NCSAM](#)

[staysafeonline.org - NCSAM](#)

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## Harris County's New Emergency Operations Center Equipped to Serve One of the Fastest Growing Regions in the Country

(Houston, TX) – Harris County, one of the fastest growing counties in the nation has a new, state-of-the-art Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to help local governments and emergency responders serve and protect residents during disasters and emergencies. Harris County is the third largest county in the United States and the largest in Texas. It has 34 cities and more than 4.4 million residents.



The Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (HCOHSEM) proudly unveiled its new EOC at the start of this year's hurricane season. The new facility is larger and better equipped to monitor incidents and mitigate problems during regional emergencies.

The new EOC, located at the [Houston TranStar](#) center, is part of the facility's expansion project that has added 26,000 square feet of new floor space and renovated 11,000 square feet of existing space. The building is structurally designed to withstand winds of up to 150 miles per hour; it has three backup generators and a 30,000-gallon water filtration system.



"Whether it is a fire, a flood or a hurricane, we now have this new state-of-the-art facility where emergency responders can gather to coordinate efforts and make decisions that are in the best interest of our residents," said Harris County Judge Ed Emmett.

The new EOC has 98 workstations equipped with electric adjustable-height desks, new monitors and computers, and new telephone systems. Wall-to-wall LED displays allow emergency officials to monitor news, hurricane tracking maps and satellite feeds. A new and larger situation room helps manage briefings.

During an activation, the new EOC allows the county to coordinate with regional, state, and national operations centers through a host of systems and back-up systems, including the Internet, video-teleconferencing, satellite phones, 800 MHz radio, short-wave/amateur radio, and local, state, and national warning/notification systems.

"The expansion was conceived from lessons learned during Hurricane Rita, but it was Hurricane Ike, that proved we did not have enough space to house the hundreds of people that it takes for response and recovery operations during a major disaster," said TranStar Director Jack Whaley.

## Harris County's New Emergency Operations Center continued ...

In the aftermath of Hurricane Rita, the EOC was activated for nine days, with more than 100 people working there and only 24 available workstations. Hurricane Ike brought more than 500 responders, representing over 100 agencies, to TranStar.

HCOHSEM has called TranStar home since 1996, when TranStar opened as the first center in the nation to combine transportation and emergency management services. TranStar provides travel time updates, incident warnings, and up-to-the-minute traffic and weather information for the greater Houston/Harris County area. Its command center has access to more



than 900 traffic cameras for monitoring daily traffic and emergency evacuations. The facility as a whole has gained 3,360 square feet of conference space that can be converted to support disaster responders when needed. This space is also available for training, exercises and drills. Other amenities include additional elevators, bathrooms, showers and sleeping quarters.

Known to the media as the region's public information hub during emergencies, HCOHSEM will continue to maintain a ready-state Joint Information Center at TranStar.

"The Harris County EOC is considered the region's command and communications hub," added Emmett. "The building expansion makes HCOHSEM, as well as regional transportation management, more efficient," added Emmett.

Houston TranStar is a partnership of four government agencies that provide leadership in transportation and emergency management in the Greater Houston area. Partners include the Texas Department of Transportation, METRO, Harris County and the City of Houston.

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## Texas Department of Public Safety ECA and CPR Training

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*District Coordinators Summer Ray (DDC 18-San Antonio) and Al Guarino (DDC 13-Bryan) setting up their AEDs.*

One of the most serious medical emergencies is sudden cardiac arrest. The American Heart Association (AHA) has determined that persons who witness the collapse of an adult in cardiac arrest should activate the emergency medical services (EMS) system and provide high-quality chest compressions and use an Automated External Defibrillator (AED). Without oxygen, permanent brain damage can result in as little as four minutes, with death following soon after. However, the immediate delivery of CPR by a bystander can protect and sustain a victim until skilled medical assistance

arrives. According to the AHA studies bystander CPR can more than double survival from cardiac arrest; bystander action can be expected to substantially improve cardiac arrest survival rates. CPR training improves trainees' ability to learn and perform, among other things, proper chest compressions and the use of the AED.



The Texas Department of Public Safety has adopted the Take 10 AED assisted bystander hands-only CPR training, which was approved by Dr. Paul Hinchey, the DPS's medical director. Currently, more than three thousand DPS commissioned and non-commissioned

employees across the state in all of the DPS regions have received this training. In addition the DPS has added more than three hundred AEDs to its locations and to selected individuals including TDEM field response personnel and the Executive Protective Bureau. This increase in the number of AEDs should make one available anytime the DPS physical readiness test is administered.

The department is also in the process of building a First Responder Organization (FRO), these persons will receive emergency medical services training and become credentialed by the medical director and have access to equipment to perform medical care.



*Emergency Care Attendant class participants.*

## **Texas Department of Public Safety ECA and CPR Training continued ...**

The department has sponsored two Emergency Care Attendant (ECA) classes and has approximately fifty state certified EMS personnel in the process of joining the FRO team. This training will allow DPS personnel to assist our citizens as well as better serve DPS personnel during medical or traumatic emergencies.



Recent graduates of the ECA training program at the Capitol Complex.

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## New District Coordinator Response Vehicles

Each year, TDEM personnel drive upwards of 1 million miles across the state, responding to state and local emergencies and disasters as well as providing support and assistance for state agencies and local governments with their emergency



planning, training and exercises. And over the years, TDEM has continued to develop specialized vehicles to better deliver that support and response. The latest vehicle being deployed by TDEM Field Response staff is the Tahoe 4x4 Special Service Vehicle.

During the 2012-2013 state biennium, TDEM received no funding for new vehicles and operated a fleet that included a variety of vehicles. During

this time, the primary field response vehicles driven by district coordinators was the Ford Expedition, which have been retrofitted with communications and first aid equipment. As these vehicles reach their end of use, they will be replaced with the new, purpose-built Tahoes.

The Tahoes come from the factory as a law enforcement package vehicle. The new TDEM Field Response Tahoes are equipped with four-wheel drive and towing capabilities along with electronics and communications consoles, cellular boosters and mobile data network capability, dual batteries, AC/DC 1200 amp converters, satellite radio/phones along with emergency lights and sirens. During the 83<sup>rd</sup> Texas Legislative Session, TDEM field staff were designated emergency responders, which gives them the statutory capability to respond to certain emergencies with flashing lights and sirens.



All Field Response vehicles including the new Tahoes are equipped with automatic external defibrillators (AEDs). TDEM District Coordinators are certified to use and train others how to administer CPR and to use the AEDs. The vehicles also have basic life support (BLS) equipment on board. TDEM has begun training and certifying field response staff along with DPS commissioned personnel to be Emergency Care Attendants (ECAs),

which will give them the credentials and skills to use the BLS gear.

## **New District Coordinator Response Vehicles continued ...**

The Tahoes also are fitted with a safety cage/Texas Highway Patrol-style equipment box. None of the current or previous TDEM vehicles have had this feature. It allows the district coordinators to organize and store their array of equipment in a safe and secure manner.

Because of the nature of the specific design of the vehicles and the wide variety of potential situations and environments they are deployed, all district coordinators complete a "high profile" four wheel drive vehicle training course at the DPS facility in Florence, where they learn to drive these specialized vehicles through a number of situations and conditions.



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## October News Briefs

### October is National Cyber Security Awareness Month



The Internet is part of everyone's life, every day. We use the Internet at work, home, for enjoyment, and to connect with those close to us.

However, being constantly connected brings increased risk of theft, fraud, and abuse. No country, industry, community, or individual is immune to cyber risks. As a nation, we face constant cyber threats against our critical infrastructure and economy. As individuals,

cybersecurity risks can threaten our finances, identity, and privacy. Since our way of life depends on critical infrastructure and the digital technology that operates it, cybersecurity is one of our country's most important national security priorities, and we each have a role to play—cybersecurity is a *shared responsibility*.

For more information, check out the [Department of Homeland Security 2014 NCSA page](#).

### Flu Season

CDC has published the 2014-2015 recommendations for the prevention and control of influenza. CDC recommends an annual flu vaccine for everyone 6 months of age and older. Flu activity is low across the United States now, but usually begins to increase in October and most commonly peaks between January and March. Make plans to get your flu vaccine this fall.

Centers for Disease Control [flu page](#).

Texas Department of State Health Services [flu page](#).

### Fire Prevention Week – October 5 – 11, 2014



Did you know that many people don't test their smoke alarms as often as they should? When there is a fire, smoke spreads fast. You need working smoke alarms to give you time to get out. Test yours every month!

Fire Prevention Week was established to commemorate the Great Chicago Fire, the tragic 1871 conflagration that killed more than 250 people, left 100,000 homeless, destroyed more than 17,400 structures and burned more than 2,000 acres. The fire began on

October 8, but continued into and did most of its damage on October 9, 1871.

Nine decades of fire prevention

Those who survived the Chicago and Peshtigo fires never forgot what they'd been through; both blazes produced countless tales of bravery and heroism. But the fires also changed the way that firefighters and public officials thought about fire safety. On the 40th anniversary of the Great Chicago Fire, the Fire Marshals Association of North America (today known as the International Fire Marshals Association), decided that the anniversary of the Great Chicago Fire should henceforth be observed not with festivities, but in a way that would keep the public informed about the importance of fire prevention. The commemoration grew incrementally official over the years.

## October News Briefs continued ...

In 1920, President Woodrow Wilson issued the first National Fire Prevention Day proclamation, and since 1922, Fire Prevention Week has been observed on the Sunday through Saturday period in which October 9 falls. According to the National Archives and Records Administration's Library Information Center, Fire Prevention Week is the longest running public health and safety observance on record. The President of the United States has signed a proclamation proclaiming a national observance during that week every year since 1925.

[National Fire Protection Association](#)

## AmeriCorps/One Star Foundation

On September 12, 2014, a new class of Texas AmeriCorps members pledged to "get things done for America" as part of a nationwide ceremony marking AmeriCorps' 20th Anniversary (**#americorps20**). This year's ceremony was an extra-special milestone, as it also celebrated the 10th Anniversary of Texas' state service commission for AmeriCorps, OneStar Foundation. OneStar hosted the event -- the largest of its kind in Texas history -- at the University of Texas at Austin's historic Lyndon B. Johnson Auditorium and Presidential Library and Museum.

Speakers at the event included Mark Updegrove, LBJ Presidential Library Director; Randi Shade, Founding Executive Director, Texas Commission on Volunteering & Community Service/former Austin City Council Member; and Rosie Mauk, Former Director of AmeriCorps among others.

President Obama, who was joined by former Presidents Bill Clinton and George H. W. Bush, led the nationwide ceremony and give remarks to AmeriCorps members from the White House, which was live-streamed by the Corporation for National and Community Service in Washington, D.C. and other state commissions across the country.

## AmeriCorps' Role in Texas

Since 1994, more than **46,265 Texas residents** have served in AmeriCorps, providing more than **61,114,400 hours of service**. They have earned education scholarships totaling more than **\$129,885,900** to help pay for college or pay back student loans and made vital contributions in the fields of Education, Environment, Disaster Services, Health, Nonprofit Capacity Building and more.

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*Taylor Ellison, former OneStar Youth Commissioner and AmeriCorps alum emcees the event.*



*Taking the pledge.*

## ***Credits***

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