



TEXAS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ONLINE

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The 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 – August 2015

Being prepared for emergencies is everyone's task. In times of calm and peace, we may tend to relax a little too much, which could lead to a feeling of complacency. And in our line of work, complacency kills. Emergencies can happen anywhere and almost any time in Texas.

Often we discuss plans, training and exercises in terms of preparedness activities. Exercises are a practical, efficient and usually cost-effective way for public or private organizations to prepare for emergencies. Exercises test and validate plans, procedures, equipment, facilities, expectations and training. From there we can identify areas that are proficient and those areas that need improvement. The lessons we learn can be used to revise operational plans and provide a basis for training to improve proficiency in executing our plans.

A welcomed benefit of a well-designed exercise is that everything occurs in a controlled environment where deployment of personnel and resources can be structured to test, validate and improve very specific plans or capabilities. By documenting and analyzing the results of exercises we can readily measure performance and progress in building, sustaining, and delivering core capabilities in pursuit of a more secure and resilient state and nation.

Critical Mass 2015 Exercise Series

In June, Texas hosted the Critical Mass 2015 Exercise Series with a functional exploration of ESF-6: Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing, and Human Services Emergency support function. Planning for the Critical Mass 2015 series began in September 2014 and consisted of three separate and distinct exercises (a seminar, a tabletop and a functional exercise) conducted over a six-month period. The exercises were carefully selected, designed and developed so that each activity built upon the previous exercise in complexity and tested and evaluated the following program priorities:

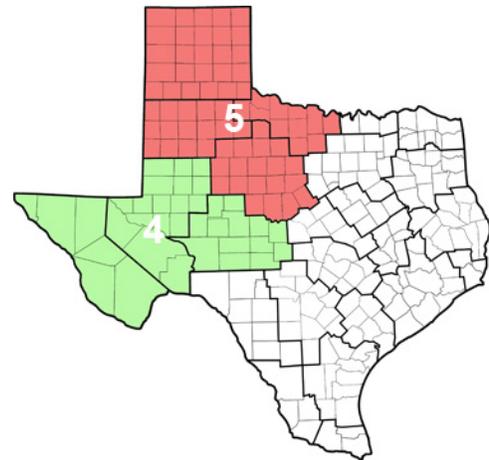
- Sheltering – providing life-sustaining services while establishing, staffing and equipping safe and secure facilities

- Feeding – developing short- and long-term programs that focus on efficient meal distribution, mass feeding centers and mobile sites as well as care for those with special diets
- Reunification – creating procedures for reuniting separated family members during a widespread disaster

Lone Star Defender Series (LSDS)

In a few weeks, exercise planning will begin for Hurr-Blizzard 2016 as the Texas Division of Emergency Management’s Lone Star Defender Series rotates to the Texas Department of Public Safety Regions 4 and 5.

LSDS is TDEM’s state exercise program specifically designed to build, sustain and deliver core capabilities in a regional fashion. It will be the third year that LSDS has advanced a cohesive and efficient exercise strategy tailored to regional threats, hazards and risks. In this scenario the attention is focused on weather events significant to Regions 4 and 5. An extreme winter storm stalls over the western third of Texas, and heavy snow, extremely low temperatures, ice accumulations, flooding and blizzard conditions have crippled the region. Severe storms of this nature can last for days, weeks and even months, which can result in loss of life, property and create significant economic losses for a community.



DPS Regions 4 and 5

Although specific objectives are still under development, the exercise will explore capabilities of the following priorities during the 2016 evaluation:

- Infrastructure Systems – specifically restoration and recovery of electric power infrastructure
- Mass Care
- Transportation – including coordination and mutual aid with New Mexico and Oklahoma

This capstone functional exercise is tentatively scheduled for September 2016.

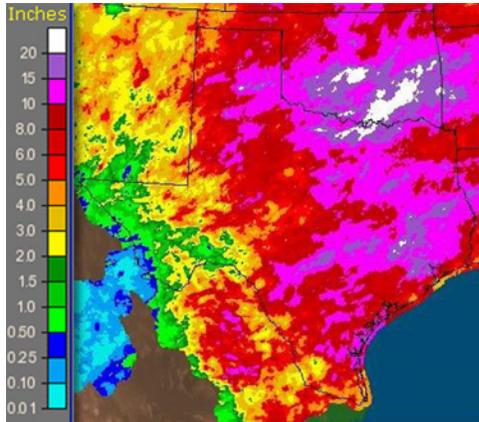
Overall, emergency drills and exercises are well worth the effort. Practice is an important aspect of the preparation process, and I urge you all to take the time to make the effort to seriously consider including drills and exercise components in your preparedness plan.

Chief W. Nim Kidd, CEM®, TEM
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[Virtual Table Top Exercise \(VTTX\) Series](#)
[About Emergency Management Exercises](#)
[Training and Exercise Planning Workshop](#)
[Exercise Reporting Information and Forms](#)
[Crosswalk of Target Capabilities to Core Capabilities \(pdf\)](#)
[Emergency Management Exercise FAQ \(pdf\)](#)
[Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program \(HSEEP\) 2013 \(Updated August 2013\)](#)

Texas Severe Weather 2015 - Recovery Is Underway

Recovery is underway for the torrential storms that plagued Texas in May and June and led to both a gubernatorial disaster declaration and a presidential declaration of major disaster (DR-4223).



NOAA observed rainfall amounts in Texas from May 4, 2015 to May 28, 2015.

Virtually all of Texas experienced between 200 percent and 600 percent of normal rainfall in the month of May. Many rivers and tributaries were in major flood stage in the eastern two-thirds of the state causing significant damage to both infrastructure and housing along the banks. Several areas of the state experienced tornadoes and disastrous flash flooding that wreaked havoc in localized areas.

Then just when river flooding was subsiding to minor stages, Texas was hit with another round of significant rain the third week of June. This sent flooding back to major levels in many river basins and caused

significant flash flooding in several areas of the state.

This event is on par with Hurricane Rita in the amount of infrastructure damage and more than doubles the number of counties declared for [Public Assistance](#)

infrastructure damage in recent memory.

Damage assessments have been a challenge for both local and state officials due to the number of areas that needed to be covered and that so many of the areas remained underwater for extensive periods, including some that are still in minor flood stage even today. FEMA has worked closely with state and local officials to make the process as painless as possible.

Seventy-three counties have been named to DR-4223 for Public Assistance and that number is expected to

exceed 110 counties as damage assessments are completed in the next few weeks. Currently, the estimated response costs and infrastructure damage is over \$380 million.



TDEM Recovery staff and city of Austin officials survey flood damage in Guerrero Park.



Individual Assistance state and FEMA preliminary damage assessments.

TDEM and FEMA Public Assistance staff are working with local and state entities to document all eligible damages and expenses to begin the grant writing process to provide funding for those costs.

The number of houses that have been categorized as having major damage or as destroyed is over 3,400. There have been 47 counties declared for [Individual Assistance](#). There have been over 28,000 households registered for FEMA assistance, and FEMA programs have paid out \$70 million in assistance to disaster survivors. Additionally, there has been over \$50 million in disaster loans to households and businesses by the [Small Business Administration](#).

Individual Assistance staff have coordinated with declared counties and FEMA to open 16 FEMA/State Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs) and eight FEMA/State Mobile Disaster Recovery Centers (MDRCs) as of July 20, 2015, with additional DRCs planned to open. The voluntary agency liaison has supported Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster meetings in declared counties, coordinated and supported 15 long-term recovery groups for 11 counties. These groups will organize assistance for those survivors that have still have unmet needs after governmental aid has been exhausted. Individual Assistance staff have also coordinated with local jurisdictions in declared counties and FEMA to assess housing issues caused by the disaster and determine solutions.



Individual Assistance and FEMA preliminary damage assessments via helicopter in Liberty and Walker counties.



Joint FEMA/state Disaster Recovery Center opens in Taylor in Williamson County.



Fischer Store Road Bridge in Hays County on May 24, 2015.



Tornado damage in Van Zandt County, May 11, 2015



Complete roadway washout near Granbury in Hood County.



Tornado and severe weather damage in Eastland County, May 9, 2015.

Challenges of the May 4 Flood Event Response in Southeast Texas



Texas DPS Region 2.

Beginning May 4, 2015, much of Texas endured a series of severe weather events that produced unprecedented flooding, including a large portion of the counties that make up Texas Department of Public Safety Region 2. Of the 35 counties in Region 2, 24 experienced varying degrees of flooding that ranged from minor to catastrophic levels. The continual downpour from back-to-back events, compounded by a cascading watershed, created one of the most complex and challenging flood responses in recent history.

As heavy rains saturated the soil in North Texas and forced massive run off into the Trinity, Neches, Brazos and Sabine River headwaters, a widespread flooding incident rapidly began to unfold. While North Texas was experiencing its own flood of record, Southeast Texas was also being inundated with heavy and continuous rainfall. Soon, the continued rainfall had nowhere to go and began overflowing from most rivers, tributaries, bayous and streams. Communities above the Lake Livingston, Sam Rayburn and Toledo Bend Reservoir dams began to flood as water was unable to pass through the dams fast enough. Even with flood control measures activated along these river systems, massive volumes of water rushed into and out of the reservoirs onto saturated ground downstream.



Trinity, Neches, Brazos and Sabine River flowing into DPS Region 2.



Flood damage in Southeast Texas.

Communities downstream began to experience some of the worst flooding since the area was devastated when the remnant of Pacific Hurricane Rosa stalled over Texas in 1994. Areas along the lower Trinity, Neches, Brazos and Sabine rivers quickly began to flood, and the rising water flooded homes and made many roads through the region impassable. Flood waters continued to rise throughout the month of May and into early June, until the rivers crested and began an agonizingly slow decline. (As of late July, there are still roads that

remain impassable along the Trinity River in Liberty County and the Neches River in North Orange County.)

At the same time serious flooding was already occurring in the city of Houston and around large parts of Harris County, a severe thunderstorm struck the very same area May 25, lasting for over eight hours. The result was an incredible 12 to 13 inches of rain that fell over a very short time on top of a relatively small, already-saturated area. Along the Brazos and Buffalo Bayou areas, over 4,000 homes were quickly flooded. There was just nowhere for this large amount of rainfall to go. Flash flooding occurred over roads



Flooding in Houston.

and highways in the affected area, overtaking hundreds of vehicles, stranding motorists and, in some instances, resulting in the loss of life. Southeast Texas sees its fair share of rain, but rarely has the region experienced such a level of flooding caused by a combination of intense localized heavy rainfall coupled with five weeks of almost continuous rain and exacerbated by rising water from upstream river flooding.

Compounding the Situation

On top of everything that was happening, Tropical Storm Bill made landfall on June 15 around the Matagorda Bay area on the mid-Texas Coast. Flooding rains from T. S. Bill



[Flood damage in Southeast Texas.](#)

covered most of Southeast Texas and tracked northeasterly into the North Texas area, reigniting flood issues. Areas that had already experienced flooding from the May 4 flood incident were once again affected by more torrential rains. Areas along the lower end of the Brazos and Colorado rivers experienced high rainfall totals, halting the fall of those rivers and extending the flooding event. On June 17, the trailing rain bands associated with T. S. Bill impacted the communities in Jasper and Newton counties. A staggering 13 inches of rain fell in a six-hour period in these communities, resulting in flash flooding that inundated homes and roads. Many of these areas might have been spared from such

extreme flooding had it not been for the unfortunate timing of T. S. Bill.

The combined effect of flooding beginning on May 4 with the flash flood incident on May 25 in the Houston area and finally T. S. Bill's landfall on June 15 created a large-scale flood event rarely seen before in Southeast Texas. Many local jurisdictions quickly exhausted on-hand emergency response resources and began requesting state resources for assistance. Traditionally, flooding is the most significant severe weather threat to areas in Southeast Texas that extend to the upper Texas Coast, and most local first responders and emergency managers in the region have had plenty of experience dealing with flooding at some point in their careers. However, the combination of all three incidents within a relatively short time period is something that very few people in this area, including emergency management professionals, have ever encountered before.

Self-Aid/ Buddy-Aid Training

For the past month, Jason Dush, TDEM EMS manager, has worked with DPS Law Enforcement Education Academy staff to provide training for DPS troopers as well as recruits on the Self-Aid/Buddy-Aid concept, including tourniquet and direct pressure application using equipment from DPS-issued medical "blow out" kits. The focus of the class is how a trooper can administer lifesaving skills to themselves or another trooper who has received some type of penetrating trauma to vital areas of the body that requires immediate attention.

With increased incidents of law enforcement officers being injured in the line of duty, it is vital that officers are trained for not only dealing with threats, but how to manage the injuries they may receive. One of the big challenges law enforcement officers face is the lack of trained medical personnel at every call or incident when they are needed. What can an officer do about a serious injury while he or she waits for an ambulance? An officer may only have minutes to apply a tourniquet or pressure dressing to stop the bleeding to save him or herself, a buddy or an injured civilian. In 2014, seven Texas law enforcement officers' lives were saved due to the deployment and application of a tourniquet by themselves or other officers. (If you consider combat medicine during war time, 60 to 70 percent of the injuries that lead to death come from bleeding out.)

The recent two-hour, hands on courses over the issued "blow out" kits involved the 153rd Trooper Trainee Academy Class B-2015 and Capitol Complex Troopers. An additional two-day Tactical Emergency Casualty Care (TECC) course was held for the Tactical Marine Unit (TMU). This is a more advanced course with classroom instruction along with practicals, ensuring a realistic training environment that strives to duplicate the stress level when troopers must manage themselves or someone else when severely injured.

During the classes, troopers were shown how and where to apply the tourniquets. They also had to apply tourniquets to themselves and another injured trooper, as well as practice applying tourniquets to each other with imposed limitations, such as if they were injured or one of their hands was out of play.



During the field training exercises, the troopers had to perform in full gear applying the skills they learned in the classroom. The pictures below show a scenario involving a trooper in a vehicle who is severely injured and is managed by a fellow trooper under the "buddy-aid" concept.



By the end of each class, it was apparent that each of the troopers who completed the training felt confident and competent enough to go out and deploy the skills they learned and demonstrated during the course. They now have the knowledge and tools needed to help save their own life, the life of another trooper or law enforcement officer and civilians when and if needed. To learn more about the training, contact Jason Dush by email at Jason.dush@DPS.texas.gov.



August News Briefs

Harris County Emergency Management Annual Report Highlights

Success and New Emergency Operations Center



(Harris County, TX) -- The Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (HCOHSEM) has released its 2014 Annual Report. The report summarizes HCOHSEM's operations and accomplishments during the past year.

"Harris County is a national model for emergency preparedness and response," said Harris County Judge Ed Emmett. "Through strong partnerships and collaboration, the county and our region are well positioned for whatever disaster comes our way."

In 2014, Harris County accomplished a major milestone with the completion of its new Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The EOC is part of the ongoing Houston TranStar building expansion that makes regional emergency and transportation management more efficient. During an activation, it houses local, state, federal and public/private sector partners.

"The Harris County EOC is the region's command and communications hub," added Emmett. "In a region with more declared disasters than most states, the formula for success is the engagement of all levels of government, the community and volunteer organizations."

Spurred by the county's population growth, advancements in technology and the needed work space, the new EOC was ready and opened in time for the start of hurricane season. Last year, the Harris County EOC was activated 10 times and was involved in 36 responses.

[Click here to view HCOHSEM's 2014 Annual Report.](#)

Save the Date:

2015 ALERRT Conference

November 1-4, 2015
Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center
1001 E. McCarty Lane, San Marcos, Texas 78666

[Conference Information](#)

Texas EMS Conference

November 22-25, 2015
Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center
Dallas, Texas
650 S. Griffin Street, Dallas, Texas 75202

[Conference Website](#)

[Online Registration](#)

Ninth Annual EMAT Leadership Symposium

February 7-10, 2016
Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center
1001 E. McCarty Lane, San Marcos, Texas 78666

[Emergency Management Association of Texas](#)

August 2015: Credits

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