

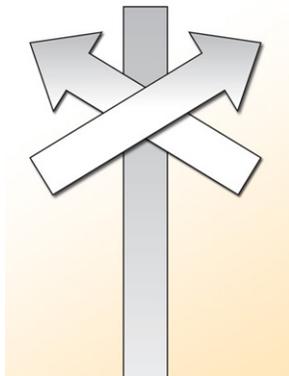


TEXAS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ONLINE

2016 Vol. 63 No. 9

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 Susan Vessell at 512-424-2532.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF – September 2016

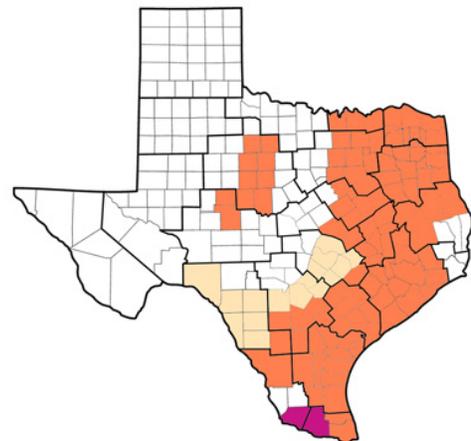


As we head into September and closer to autumn, here in Texas we find ourselves at an interesting crossroads, an anything-could-happen crossroads. For the last several years, Texas weather has been a mixed bag of extremes. We've experienced an historical drought, an unprecedented wildfire season, vast areas of flooding, deadly severe storms and a Goliath blizzard. The only thing missing seems to be a hurricane.

Five years ago, Bastrop County, like much of Texas, was on fire. Extended record breaking drought compounded by a searing and windy summer created conditions extremely perfect for a widespread firestorm. By the time the last fire was out, almost four million acres of Texas had burned. When relief came, it came with relentless tenacity.

In May and again in October 2015, vast areas of Texas experienced massive amounts of rain. On the one hand, years of debilitating drought was completely eliminated. Lakes and reservoirs once critically depleted were filled and, in many cases, overflowed. But all that rain came at an expensive and deadly cost.

As we were preparing this issue of the Texas Emergency Management Online newsletter, Texans from every region of the state were growing weary under a lengthy spell of spring and summer heat. Summers in Texas are hot, but this year summer heat came on early and didn't let up. Numerous counties across Texas were under heat and extreme heat advisories, and the media outlets were counting the growing number of plus-100 degree days. It was coined a "binary" summer, because of all the ones and zeroes on the forecast charts. After being drought free



for a time, the dryness began to build and grass fires were becoming more and more common.

Last month, tropical moisture finally began to build in the Gulf of Mexico. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration revised its earlier 2016 Atlantic hurricane outlook, increasing its prediction to a 70 percent chance that we will see 12 to 17 named storms, including up to 4 possible major hurricanes. It's been 10 years since a major hurricane struck the Texas Coast. With hundreds of Texas communities still very much involved in extensive flood recovery projects, a hurricane at the right place and right time could be catastrophic.



September is National Preparedness Month.

Our nation sets aside this month to remember the challenges we have overcome and reinforce the need for all of us to be prepared for disasters and emergencies.

Being prepared is a shared responsibility; it takes the entire community. This September, being prepared could be particularly important, so I urge all Texans to commit to accomplishing the following simple tasks:

- Learn about emergencies or hazards in your community and the proper response
- Build an emergency kit
- Make a communications plan
- Get involved in preparedness in your community

Every incident and disaster presents its own unique and often unexpected elements and consequences. That past event that had been the worst yet, just may be another record waiting to be broken.

Chief W. Nim Kidd, CEM® TEM
Follow [@chiefkidd](#) on Twitter

Additional links:

[MAKE AN EMERGENCY PLAN](#)

[2016 National Preparedness Month](#)

[America's PrepareAthon!](#)

[Community Emergency Response Teams \(PDF\)](#)

[Volunteer in Texas](#)

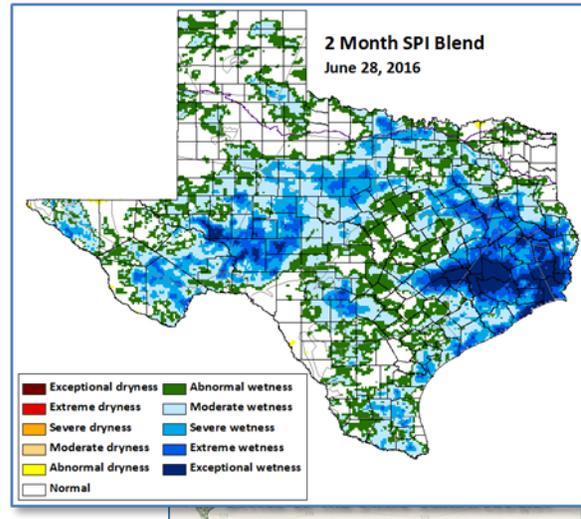
[Texas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster](#)

[National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster](#)

Fall & Winter Wildfire Potential Outlook

Looking ahead to the fall of 2016 and winter of 2017, there are a couple of concerns that could promote increased wildfire activity. First is the abundant growth of grasses across the state brought on by the above normal precipitation levels of late spring and early summer. (See graphic below) The second is the forecasted return of La Niña conditions which could be in place by this fall.

Late spring/early summer precipitation is very important to the expectations and potential for a summer, fall, or winter fire season. It sets the table by either restricting or enhancing the amount of grass growth across the landscape. With the above normal precipitation levels experienced this year, just like last year, it has produced a bumper growth of grass. This is especially the case in the areas shaded in greens and blues in the above map. These areas cover some of the states more fire-prone areas. Eventually these grasses will cure and become a potential fuel for a wildfire.



Another indicator that could signal the potential of a fall or winter fire season is the ENSO (El Niño Southern Oscillation) phase. ENSO phase reflects the departure from normal of sea surface temperatures in Pacific Ocean along the equator west of South America.

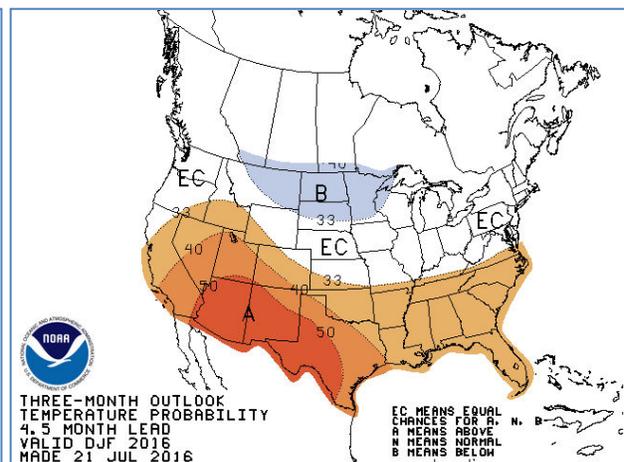
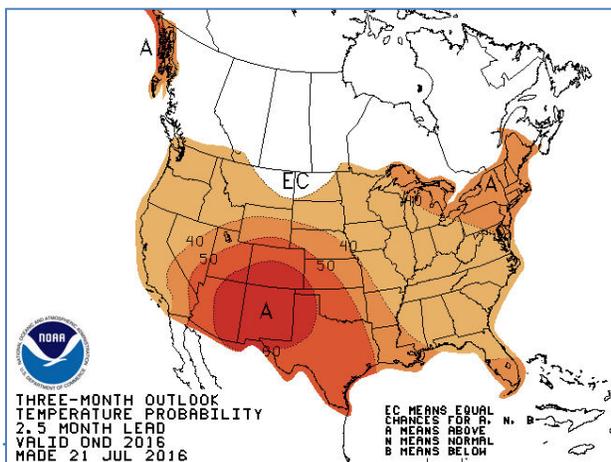
A cooling of these waters is referred to as the La Niña phase, and the warming of them as El Niño. Neutral would be whenever neither is present. NOAA has 50 plus years of data on the impacts of each ENSO phase on US weather. For Texas, above normal moisture has occurred during the late fall through early spring months most of the time when an El Niño is present and below normal moisture with La Niña. ENSO phase has been a fairly reliable indicator of expected moisture levels for the fall through spring months.

According to the graphic below, produced by NOAA's Climate Prediction Center on July 14, 2016, there is a 55 to 60 percent chance of La Niña conditions being present this fall and winter, then fade by early spring.

Even though this is a forecast, it does indicate there is a decent chance of La Niña occurring sometime this fall and into the winter. With that being the case, the Climate Prediction Center is forecasting above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation for Texas during this period. (See the following graphics)

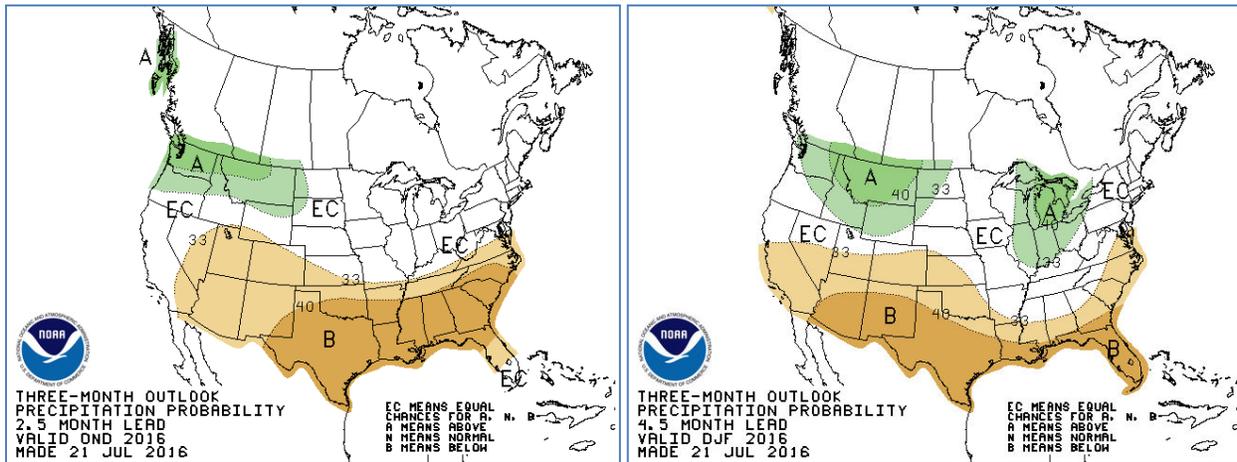
October – December Temperature

December – February Temperature



October – December Precipitation

December – February Precipitation



The emergence of La Niña conditions this fall could signal the onset of a drier and warmer than normal climate for the state from October through next March. Conditions like these in the past have combined to produce some of our most active fall, winter, and spring fire seasons. Examples include the fall – spring periods of: 2005-2006, 2007-2008, and 2010-2011. In each of these cases, the late spring-early summer rains produced heavy grass growth. Once these grasses cured, they served as ready fuel beds for wildfires. This year, so far, appears to be following a similar scenario. Wildfires burning under the conditions expected this fall and winter can be dangerous and threaten the property and safety of Texans when and where they occur. Caution is advised to stay alert to the evolving situation as the fall and winter months move closer.

The threats for increased wildfire potential this fall and winter include:

1. Increased grass fuel loading across the state
2. The emergence of La Niña which is expected to produce:
 - a) Above normal temperatures
 - b) Below normal moisture

Contributor:

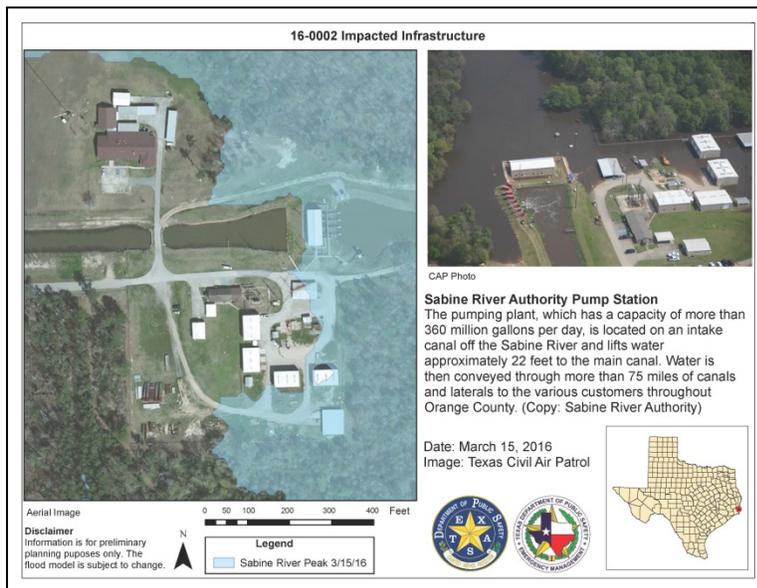
Tom Spencer
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New Technology Section Added to the Texas State Operations Center

The Texas State Operations Center (SOC) operates under the Incident Command System (ICS), which is designed to support effective and efficient incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure*. To that end, a Technology Section was recently added to the SOC that combines critical information systems, communications, information technology, critical infrastructure and geospatial information systems into one unit. The intent of the SOC Technology Section is to organize key technologies into one group to improve communications and coordination to enhance the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) Response and Recovery mission.



Jeff Newbold, State Coordinator for Critical Information Systems (CIS) cites the need from recent incidents. *"During the May Severe Weather, 16-0008 major flooding incident and several other recent incidents we had a continuous need within the SOC for technology staff to work closer together such as our GIS mapping staff to work next to Department of Public Safety (DPS) critical infrastructure staff or CIS staff to work next to DPS communications staff. The Technology Section will also allow TDEM to improve incident response times with GIS mapping and data analytics to produce demographic profiles of evacuation zones and the amount of assistance that is required or to identify critical infrastructure at risk and potential cascading effects from specific infrastructure going off-line."*



Moving forward, a major purpose of the Technology Section will be to support the mission of TDEM's local and regional partners through the TDEM Field Response Section and the TDEM CIS Response & Development Section. Michael Ouimet, Manager for Critical Information Systems, HQ, provides one example: *"TDEM CIS is working to ensure that TDEM and its local, regional and federal partners are working from the same GIS map data and common operating picture and that information is distributed in near real time to everyone that requires it for*

incident response."

More information on the new SOC Technology Section will be reported at the next Texas Emergency Management Advisory Committee (TEMAC) meeting held in conjunction with the [EMS Conference in Dallas](#), November 19, 20 and 21, at the [Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center](#).

* Federal Emergency Management Agency

A Test of the Texas Emergency Tracking Network System



The Texas Emergency Tracking Network (ETN) was put to the test during this year's Air Evacuation Exercise. The Texas ETN system has been newly rebuilt by Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) Critical Information Systems (CIS) and was deployed for this year's hurricane season. This system uses custom boards in WebEOC and a custom-built mobile application to allow for real time data entry and accountability for the movement of people, pets and assets across vehicles and locations. This mobile application is available for download for both Apple and Android devices through their respective app stores.

The use of ETN in this exercise was coordinated between the Texas State Guard, the State Operations Center, TDEM Field Response, local jurisdictions and CIS. Training was conducted onsite and through the app via a training video produced by the TDEM Preparedness Section proving how simple and intuitive the application is to use. The ETN system was deployed to all locations and transportation points, and performed successfully in its first widespread deployment. Equipment used at the tactical level in this exercise was primarily iPhones and iPads, which were provided and supported by TDEM CIS. In the operation centers, ETN was monitored live via WebEOC.



ETN in use during the 2016 Air Evacuation Drill

The deployment of the ETN system was a success. Users are now comfortable with the system as a whole, since they have learned to use it and have seen it in action. Areas of improvement were also identified to make the system even better, which CIS developers are already building into the next version.

September 2016 News Briefs

Sugarcane aphids have arrived in the High Plains

By: Kay Ledbetter

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Contact: Dr. Ed Bynum, 806-677-5600, ebynum@ag.tamu.edu

AMARILLO – Sugarcane aphid populations are exploding in grain sorghum fields across the Texas High Plains, warns a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service specialist in Amarillo.

Dr. Ed Bynum, AgriLife Extension entomologist, said the sugarcane aphid populations in the South Plains have reached economic thresholds. Infestations in the field can be just a few aphids per plant to a thousand or more aphids per plant.

Infestations were found Aug. 1 in sorghum silage trials near Bushland, and there was a report of aphids in an Ochiltree County field, he said.

“We need to make sure producers are out checking their fields, scouting for the sugarcane aphid and to be prepared for when insecticide applications are warranted.”

Bynum said AgriLife Extension entomologists have advised the threshold for the High Plains is to treat when:

- 20 percent of plants have aphids in the pre-boot stage.
- 20 percent of the plants have no more than 50 aphids in the boot stage.
- 30 percent in the flowering-milk.
- 30 percent infested with localized areas of heavy honeydew and established aphid colonies in soft dough and dough stages.
- At black layer, when heavy honeydew and established aphid colonies are present. Treat only for preventing harvest problems.

Bynum said field trials have shown only two chemicals provide good control of the aphid. These products are Transform and Silvanto.

Other insecticide products that might be recommended for control have not proven to be effective in studies across Texas, he said.

“Producers can control the sugarcane aphid if they stay on top of the situation and make timely applications,” Bynum said.

For the most up-to-date news, sightings, recommendations on sampling and control, go to <http://txscan.blogspot.com>.

AAA: Road debris causes avoidable crashes, deaths



From shredded tires to a sofa sitting in traffic lanes, roadway debris caused more than 200,000 crashes with 500 deaths over four years across the USA, according to a new report.

About 39,000 people were injured in the crashes from 2011 through 2014, according to the study released Thursday by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

More than one-third of the deaths resulted from a driver swerving to avoid hitting debris, the report said. In

other cases, cars struck the debris, sometimes setting off a chain-reaction of collisions.

The report found debris problems worsened from a 2001 study that found 25,000 crashes and less than 100 deaths that year. The latest version found an annual average of 50,000 debris-related crashes reported to police, with 9,800 injuries and 125 deaths during the four most recent years statistics were available.

All states have fines for items that fall from a vehicle onto a road, ranging from \$10 in Delaware and Wisconsin to \$5,000 and a year in prison in Washington state, according to the report. At least 16 states list jail time as a possible punishment.

[From USA Today](#)

How NASA is using artificial intelligence to save lives of firefighters, first responders

By Jason Henry, San Gabriel Valley Tribune

NASA's new artificial intelligence — capable of running on a cellphone — could soon put Apple's Siri and Microsoft's Cortana to shame.

The hope for the AI, named AUDREY, is to be deployed in the field to help save first responders' lives by making split-second recommendations in dangerous situations, NASA officials said.

AUDREY works by pulling in data from the environment and from the equipment being carried by first responders.

In this way, the AI can detect temperature changes, gases and other threats. The cloud-based overseer will then on its own send custom warnings to individuals in the field.

In a fire, it might detect a propane tank through a camera carried by the firefighter, or warn of elevated temperatures in a nearby room.

AUDREY's connectivity bridges the gaps in different communication networks, allowing the AI to spread information to different agencies at the same time.

AUDREY stands for Assistant for Understanding Data through Reasoning, Extraction and sYnthesis. JPL partnered with the Department of Homeland Security to develop the AI.

DHS wants AUDREY to become another tool for what it calls the "Next Generation First Responder."

The AI pulls in all the data and distributes only the most relevant information to individuals based on their role and location, allowing the first responders to do their jobs without getting overloaded by readings.

AUDREY isn't quite ready for release, but JPL plans to start real-world tests within a year.

[From San Gabriel Valley Tribune](#)

Fire Drill and Evacuation Plans

I think that we can all take a trip down memory lane for a moment and remember our childhood fire drills in school. We remember having to get in single file lines and proceeding to the closest exit and running through the same old routine quarterly.

The purpose being practicing for the worst case scenario which would be an active fire inside the school.

The overall objective should be practicing to the point where it is muscle memory. Implementing a strong a reliable fire evacuation plan should be a priority for not only businesses and schools but for inside the home as well.

A well-rounded fire evacuation plan

A solid, well-rounded fire evacuation plan can benefit all occupants inside any occupied facility or dwelling. Inside the plan should be conditions where an evacuation is warranted and proper routes and exits that are easy to understand in the event of an emergency. With the graphic technology that is available for us today, making a diagram that shows the exits and routes is now easier than ever.

Here are a few tips that can help with making the evacuation of a building or home successful:

1. Clear egress paths.
2. Install fire safety equipment on each floor of the facility to include fire extinguishers.
3. Ensure smoke detectors are placed and functioning in all sleep areas.
4. Establish a safe meeting place outside the structure in the even of an emergency.
5. Take accountability.

In a family setting, involving children in the evacuation plan diagram is very important. Consider having the children draw their own diagram this way they are able to draw something that will be able to understand. Also, this will keep them focused on the importance of knowing what to do in the event of the emergency.

Be safe, be focused and don't be another statistic.

[From Emergency Management Digest](#)

September 2016: Credits

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