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TEXAS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT RELATED BRIEFS, TIPS AND LINKS
Additional information on events and resources for the emergency management community.
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MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

We repeatedly cover many topics in the monthly Texas Emergency Management Online (TEMO), especially severe weather events and other scenarios that are directly related to preparedness. Scroll through a few TEMO newsletters and you’re bound to see articles that seem familiar. Lather, rinse, repeat. If only it was that easy. This year we experienced many significant events that affected the lives of Texans.

Persistent drought during the first half of the year didn’t last terribly long and eventually gave way to freezing rain, ice and snow, flooding, tornadoes, and even hailstorms. The National Weather Service predicted that Texas would see rain again by May and boy, they weren’t kidding. The second half of the year included more tornadoes, enough rainfall and flooding to bring drought conditions down to less than 1% across the state. Also, let’s not forget the unexpected and unfortunate occurrences like the Gainesville hospital explosion, Santa Fe High School shooting, earthquakes in West Texas and the Panhandle, numerous wildfires - including six that resulted in federal declarations, and the Boil Water Notice in Austin. We talk about preparedness as often as we do because it’s serious and life-threatening stuff.

Both the location and size of Texas contribute to the potential for almost any natural hazard to occur in our great state. Living here comes with some risk as evidenced by over 3,000 jurisdictions that required state response in 2018. History has shown that we cannot afford to become complacent or be unprepared. As our population continues to increase, so too will the potential financial, environmental and human cost of every disaster. Throughout this cycle, Texans will continue to perfect the skills that we need to effectively and confidently manage whatever comes our way; continuing to prepare for what will come, learning from what we have experienced, and passing that knowledge along. During this holiday season, please help keep Texas safe. Remember that severe weather can happen anywhere in the state, and no one is immune to natural or manmade disasters. Take the time now to review your safety plan, stock your
emergency kits, and talk to your family about what you will do in case of an emergency. Please also remember to keep the families and friends of our fallen first responders in your thoughts and prayers. Best wishes for the holiday season - may you all have a safe and prosperous new year.

Chief W. Nim Kidd, CEM®
Follow @chiefkidd on Twitter

WINTER STORM PREPAREDNESS

Winter storms can bring extreme cold, freezing rain, ice, snow, high winds, or a combination of all of these conditions. This article, extracted from the FEMA guide on winter storm preparedness, is designed to help you properly prepare for a winter storm and to learn how to protect yourself before, during, and after one.

Planning and preparing can make a big difference in safety and resiliency in the wake of a winter storm. The ability to maintain or quickly recover following a winter storm requires a focus on preparedness, advanced planning, and knowing what to do when the time comes.

Winter storms can cause power outages that last for days. They can make roads and walkways extremely dangerous, and negatively affect critical community services including public transportation, childcare, and health programs. Injuries and deaths may occur from exposure, dangerous road conditions, carbon monoxide poisoning, and other winter storm conditions.

The National Weather Service (NWS) refers to winter storms as “deceptive killers” because most deaths and injuries are indirectly related to the storms. The majority of deaths caused by winter storms are from vehicle accidents due to ice and snow. Heart attacks brought on by over-exertion from shoveling or clearing snow also increase during and after storms. Finally, individuals also suffer dangerous injuries (e.g., frostbite and hypothermia) because of exposure and lack of protection from the wind and cold. Another significant danger is sickness or death from carbon monoxide poisoning which can occur when using portable generators indoors, in attached garages, too close to the house, or when starting a vehicle without clearing snow and ice from the tailpipe.

What you can do before a winter storm
Sign up for local alerts and warnings. The NWS provides alerts and warnings for all hazards through a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio (NWR) receiver. There are radio receivers that are designed to work with external notification devices for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. For more information on NWR receivers, visit NOAA Weather Radio Hazards.

You can also register for jurisdiction-specific alerts such as the ones available at the following links:
WATCHES AND WARNINGS
Advisories, Watches, and Warnings describe changing winter weather conditions. Learning what these terms mean can help you understand how an approaching storm may impact you and what actions to take to stay safe. Winter Weather related Advisories, Watches, and Warnings are issued by your local National Weather Service office and are based upon local criteria.

Winter Weather Advisories are issued when snow, blowing snow, ice, sleet, or a combination of these wintry elements is expected but conditions should not be hazardous enough to meet Warning criteria. Be prepared for winter driving conditions and possible travel difficulties. Use caution when driving.

Winter Storm Watches are issued when conditions are favorable for a significant winter storm event. Heavy sleet, heavy snow, ice storms, blowing snow, or a combination of these events are possible.

Winter Storm Warnings are issued for a significant winter weather event including snow, ice, sleet, blowing snow, or a combination of these hazards. Travel will become difficult or impossible in some situations. Delay your travel plans until conditions improve.

You may not be at home when a winter storm starts, so it is important to have basic supplies of food and water as well as a way to stay warm without power in several locations such as your workplace, vehicle, and/or school. You can build your supplies over time by adding a few items each week or month. Gather, in advance, the necessary supplies and items you will need to stay safe after the winter storm passes. For a complete list of emergency supplies, visit ready.gov or emergency supply kits. Check supplies off of your Winter Storm Preparedness Checklist once you add them to your emergency kit. Warm clothes and blankets can help prevent hypothermia. Do not forget warm, waterproof, and protective footwear as well as gloves. Ask yourself, “What would I need for myself and my family if a winter storm struck?” and “What would I or my family require if we did not have access to a grocery store or pharmacy for at least three days?” Add any of these specific items to your Winter Storm Preparedness Checklist.
Winterize your home by insulating walls and attics, caulking and weather-stripping doors and windows, and installing storm windows or covering windows with plastic. Insulate water pipes and allow faucets to drip or trickle during unusually cold weather or if the power and heat are out to avoid freezing. When water freezes, it expands, and this can cause water pipes to burst. Know how to shut off water valves if a pipe bursts. Clear rain gutters, repair roof leaks, check your roof to make sure it can handle the extra weight of snow and ice, and cut away tree branches that could fall on a house or neighboring structure. If you have a fireplace, hire a certified chimney sweep to inspect and/or clean your chimney once a year. Keep pathways and driveways clear between storms to avoid buildup of snow piles and icing. Install battery-operated carbon monoxide detectors or electric detectors with battery backups in central locations on every level of your home. This will provide an early warning of accumulating carbon monoxide, which is a colorless, odorless, tasteless, and potentially deadly gas. Keep fire extinguishers on hand and make sure everyone in your home knows how to use them. If your smoke alarms get power from your home’s electrical system (hardwired), make sure the backup battery is replaced at least once a year, so your alarms will work during a power outage. Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified professional. Review your property insurance, and safeguard critical documents. Get trained on specific needs your family may have. Identify a place nearby where you can safely warm up should you lose heat in your...
Renters should check with their landlord or property manager to ensure that they have taken care of these necessary building improvements or to find out your responsibilities with respect to these actions.

Winterize your vehicle by conducting a winter weather check on your vehicle to ensure the following car components are within safe working limits:

- Antifreeze levels
- Battery and ignition system
- Brakes
- Exhaust system (carbon monoxide is odorless and can be fatal)
- Fuel and air filters
- Heater and defroster
- Lights and flashing hazard lights
- Oil
- Thermostat
- Windshield wiper equipment
- Good winter tires

**What you can do during a winter storm**

Stay indoors and off the roads. Federal Highway Administration reports indicate that the risk of vehicular accidents rises sharply in winter weather conditions. In an average year, there are more than half a million vehicle crashes when the roads are snowy, slushy, or icy, resulting in nearly 2,000 fatalities and 140,000 injuries. Use caution when approaching bridges and overpasses as these areas tend to ice up faster than normal roadways when temperatures drop. If you must drive, keep emergency supplies of food, water and warm clothing in your car. Maintain as full a tank of gas as possible by refueling more often in case you are stuck in traffic or have an accident and have to wait several hours for assistance. Travel during the day and do not travel alone. Stay on main roads and always let someone know your destination, route, and expected arrival time. If you become stranded in your car on a major highway, remain in your vehicle until help arrives. If you are stranded on a more remote road, use items around you to attract attention for help.

While indoors, close off rooms to consolidate and retain heat. Dress in layers, and use blankets to stay warm. Bring pets into a warm place and out of the storm or severe cold. Never use a generator, camp stove, charcoal grill, or gasoline or propane heater indoors, as these items can start accidental fires, cause electric shock, and/or cause deadly carbon monoxide poisoning. Generators should be used only outdoors and should be located at least 20 feet away from doors, windows, and vents. Never heat a home with a cooktop or oven. Limit your time outdoors, and stay dry. Nearly 100 people die every year from heart attacks brought on by shoveling snow. Use caution, take breaks, push the snow instead of lifting it when possible, and lift lighter loads. Consider clearing the sidewalks of your elderly neighbors or neighbors with disabilities.

If you detect symptoms of frostbite, which is the freezing of the skin and body tissue beneath the skin, in either yourself or another person, seek medical care.
immediately. Signs of frostbite include loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities, such as the fingers, toes, earlobes, face and the tip of the nose. Hypothermia occurs when one’s body temperature drops to dangerously low levels, so, before addressing symptoms of frostbite, first determine whether you or someone else is showing signs of hypothermia such as uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness or apparent exhaustion. For more information, visit the CDC’s page on frostbite and hypothermia.

As the wind increases, your body is cooled at a faster rate, causing skin temperature to drop. This is why it sometimes “feels” colder than the actual temperature. Wind chill is the temperature it “feels like” when you are outside. The NWS provides a Wind Chill Chart to show the difference between air temperature, and the perceived temperature, and the amount of time until frostbite occurs.

What you can do after a winter storm

After a winter storm, the road to recovery can be challenging. It may take several weeks for clean-up and rebuilding. If your home is damaged, no longer safe, and/or has lost power, you may want to go to a designated public shelter. Text SHELTER + your ZIP code (e.g., SHELTER 20472) to 43362 (FEMA) to find the nearest shelter in your area. Follow local media for information on shelters. You can also find a shelter near you by checking out the FEMA mobile app: fema.gov/mobile-app.

Friends, family, and neighbors will likely be the first to provide help. Plan with neighbors now to help each other and share resources. Nonprofit and faith-based organizations often provide support immediately after a winter storm. If you or someone in your household has a disability, an access or functional need, and receives disability services, contact your local disability service provider for assistance.

Only drive if necessary. Check for snow and ice around your tailpipe before starting your car, and check regularly if idling during a snowstorm. Clean all snow and ice from your car before driving. Dress in warm clothing, stay dry, prevent prolonged exposure to cold and wind, and avoid overexertion clearing/shoveling snow. Overexertion can lead to a medical emergency. Monitor local news and alerts for emergency information and instructions.

Insurance is an essential part of recovery. If you have insurance, you may receive financial compensation for some of your losses. Take pictures to document your damage, and file a claim as soon as possible. Do what you can to prevent further damage (e.g., putting a tarp on a damaged roof) because insurance may not cover damage that occurs after the winter storm. The Federal Government provides assistance only when the President declares an area to be a federal disaster. FEMA may provide financial assistance for basic needs that cannot be met by other sources. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Small Business Administration, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture may also provide
disaster assistance. Insurance claims and other forms of assistance may take time to arrive, and, if you are missing key documents, additional delays are possible.

For more help with winter storm preparedness and to download a Winter Storm Preparedness Checklist, visit Ready.gov/prepare.

THE SALVATION ARMY IS DOING THE MOST GOOD AS HURRICANE HARVEY RESPONSE CONTINUES

The Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Services (EDS) immediately responded on August 25 when Hurricane Harvey struck the Texas coastline, providing food, hydration, and emotional and spiritual care to survivors and first responders. In addition to local units in the path of the hurricane, trained disaster teams from throughout Texas and beyond were prepared and staged in San Antonio and deployed in the aftermath of the storm. At the peak of service 103 Salvation Army mobile feeding units were working in affected areas delivering more than 950,000 meals, 33,000 food boxes, 92,000 comfort kits and 15,000 cleanup kits in the months that followed.

Port Lavaca was one of many Texas communities devastated by Hurricane Harvey when the wind and water decimated apartments, houses, trailers and businesses. Johnny, a long-time resident, rode out the storm inside the largest of his four trailer homes. “It was really scary, but I had no money and no place to go,” he said. “The roof was torn off my trailer and the water pipe broke in half. I’ve been sleeping in my truck since the storm.”

The Salvation Army was able to help many survivors like Johnny in the days immediately after the storm in numerous communities like Port Lavaca. “The Salvation Army is one of the bright spots in my life right now,” said Johnny. “They’re friendly and they drive in and deliver hot meals twice a day. And the food is good!”

This scene was replicated time and time again in affected communities for eight weeks, as the preparation and delivery of multiple meals each day continued in the worst affected areas.
The Salvation Army is one of the most recognizable non-profits in the country and while most people respond very favorably when asked about it, few can tell you what the organization does beyond ringing the bell at Christmastime and operating thrift stores.

So, how did The Salvation Army come to be involved in disaster relief? The answer to that question begins with the very roots of the organization dating back to the late 1800s in Victorian England. The Salvation Army, primarily a church, was founded in 1865 by a Methodist minister named William Booth. Booth saw the incredible poverty and need apparent in the slums of the East End of London and was frustrated by the lack of support and concern shown by the churches of that day. He began preaching on street corners and his mission quickly gained many converts and followers.

As his ministry developed, Booth experienced a growing awareness of the complex nature of poverty and its impact on the life circumstances and life choices of the poor. For him, it was not an option to skim over the surface of the issues but to tackle them head-on. His response was to find ways of practical support interwoven with the presentation of the Gospel. And his intention was not to simply give temporary aid, but to help people permanently improve the circumstances of their lives.

From its earliest days, this knowledge has shaped the way The Salvation Army has grown and developed, and it still motivates The Salvation Army in its mission today. Slogans such as ‘Soup, Soap and Salvation’ and ‘Heart to God and Hand to Man’ have expressed this passion to communicate the Gospel in a relevant and vibrant way that includes addressing real, practical need.

The first disaster response by The Salvation Army took place in 1900 when a devastating hurricane destroyed Galveston, Texas, killing more than 5,000 people. The devastation was so significant that the National Commander at the time, Frederick Booth-Tucker, ordered Salvation Army Officers from across the country to proceed to the disaster site to provide spiritual and practical assistance. At that time, there were no mobile kitchens, so the officers walked the streets giving people water and coffee.
The commitment to take care of a person’s physical need is matched only by the organization’s desire to provide emotional and spiritual care to an individual in crisis. This is an integral and unique part of The Salvation Army EDS program. Salvation Army Officers (ordained ministers) and trained volunteer counselors are part of every response team. Prayer is offered where appropriate and requested to disaster survivors and first responders alike.

Today in Texas, The Salvation Army operates an EDS fleet consisting of 31 mobile kitchens, five rapid response vehicles, two field kitchens with the combined capacity to produce 25,000 meals per day, one communications unit, and a command unit. “One of the strengths of The Salvation Army EDS structure is that it is rapidly scalable in times of disaster,” said Alvin Migues, Emergency Disaster Services Director for The Salvation Army, Texas Division. “Our mobile kitchens are assigned to Salvation Army units around the state and can be mobilized very quickly to respond to an event. Additionally, The Salvation Army has its own disaster training curriculum and we have fully trained teams ready to deploy literally at a moment’s notice. This structure is used across the country, and so in the case of a large-scale event, Salvation Army teams, literally from every state, will deploy and provide support for weeks or even months.”

The Salvation Army’s ongoing assistance since Hurricane Harvey has transitioned in focus from the immediate provision of food, drinks, cleanup kits and comfort kits, to the long-term support of individuals and families working to piece their lives back together. Salvation Army caseworkers are meeting with those in affected areas providing financial assistance and referrals to partner agencies and non-governmental organizations. Eight warehouses serving as Points of Distribution across the affected region have been opened and these facilities are receiving, sorting and distributing a wide range of items that have been donated to The Salvation Army to help survivors.

Special efforts have been made by The Salvation Army to reach into underserved areas affected by Harvey. One such community is the city of Cleveland, located in Liberty County, north of Houston. Pastor Christine Shippey, founder of Covenant with Christ International, connected with Misti Townsend, a Regional Recovery Program Manager for The Salvation Army, and was desperately seeking a way to help survivors after local funding ran out. Reverend Shippey had recently secured a
warehouse and delivery vans at the same time as The Salvation Army was seeking a location and a network to store and distribute goods to rural counties. “A wonderful partnership has developed between The Salvation Army and Covenant with Christ International under the guidance of Reverend Shippey,” said Townsend. “We are now able to deliver much needed supplies that can be distributed to those working so hard to put their lives back together in small, rural communities in this area.”

The Salvation Army, motivated by the love of God and with a mission to meet human need, provides service in every zip code in Texas and is committed to stand by its brand promise, Doing the Most Good, as individuals and families continue to put life back together.

“The Salvation Army was already working in most of the communities that were affected by Hurricane Harvey,” said Migues. “We were there long before the hurricane hit, and we’ll be there long after the recovery process is over.”

**Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) Attends Texas Emergency Medical Services (EMS) 2018 Conference**

Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) staff traveled to Fort Worth to attend the Texas Emergency Medical Services (EMS) 2018 Conference on November 18-21. It was the 6th year that TDEM participated as an exhibitor in addition to providing a course offering. Headquarters and field staff were stationed at the TDEM exhibition booth speaking with attendees about the role TDEM plays in coordinating the state’s emergency management program as well as how TDEM assists local jurisdictions in times of disaster. Several district coordinators were on hand to discuss the importance of preparedness, free training opportunities throughout the state, and to answer visitors questions.

The TDEM Chief of Staff presented the Emergency Management 101 course to students on Monday, November 19. The period of instruction gave an overview of major disasters in Texas spanning from the year 1953 to present day, provided an explanation of TDEM’s role during a state or federally-declared disaster, and educational resources were shared outlining the process of requesting state and federal aid during, and after a disaster. The audience was comprised of civilians, law enforcement, fire, EMS and emergency management professionals from across the state. A brief Q&A was held at the end of the presentation.
Additionally, 20 Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) Troopers joined TDEM staff at the conference to earn continuing education credits. The course offerings and hands-on training allowed for the DPS Medical First Responder Program to assess and evaluate their current best practices and identify potential areas of improvement. The troopers connected with EMS providers from across the state to strengthen and create partnerships for future lifesaving efforts.

In addition to a wide variety of training sessions and workshops offered over the four-day period, TDEM staff and DPS Troopers were able to visit the exhibit hall to learn about the latest emergency medicine cutting-edge technology.

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

**New Exercise Guidelines Come Right Before Holiday Season**
Published November 14, 2018 by Dennis Turner, KXXV News

WACO, TX (KXXV) -
New guidelines from the federal government this week aim to get Americans moving and combat obesity.

It states that any kind of physical activity has benefits... not just exercise.

Susan Francis, says she started working out for a specific reason.

"Just trying to not get old too fast, trying to stay in shape," Francis said.

Now, new guidelines from the Department of Health and Human Services say she’s on the right track.

It extols the benefits of exercise... but emphasizes all physical activity... just as we enter the time of year where we like to eat the most.

"We’re made to move. We’re made to be active and not doing so is very counteractive," said sports medicine physician Corbett Boone.

The study says 150 minutes of activity a week, just 20 minutes a day provides numerous benefits.

Fitness instructor Isabell Balcells pushes her students even further, with periods of high-intensity, followed by so-called “recovery periods” of slightly lower intensity.
“100 percent feel better because I think once you learn to work at the higher intensity and learn to work at a higher threshold your body does feel a lot better,” Balcells said.

Research shows this kind of workout provides the best benefits.

Experts used to say you had to exercise for at least 20 minutes to get any benefit, then they lowered it to 10 minutes. Now, the experts say any physical activity can add up to a benefit.

And for the first time, the guidelines call for about three hours a day of activity for children ages 3 to 5.

Doctors say all this movement helps prevent disease.

“Cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, different types of cancers,” said Dr. Boone, who adds, it can even improve brain health.

And here’s something to motivate you... the experts say those who start from little-to-no exercise to a regular regimen show the biggest benefits.

Susan Francis calls it, her “fountain of youth.”

“Several years back, I had a scan for bone density and it was a little bit low, and that was before I started Crossfit and I had a new scan a few years after I’d been doing it and it increased my bone density to a normal level,” Francis said.

And she says that’s helped keep her motivated... and hopes it might give her some more company at the gym.


**Crews Working 24/7 to Expedite Construction of New Kingsland Bridge**

Published November 9, 2018. By Jacquelyn Powell of KXAN News

AUSTIN (KXAN) -- Fifteen days after flooding washed away the RM 2900 bridge, the Kingsland community is celebrating the new bridge that's going up in its place. TxDOT crews broke ground on construction of the new bridge on Friday.
District engineer for TxDOT Austin Terry McCoy says usually, contractors are hired to design bridges, and the process can take around one year. However, he says on the day the bridge was washed away, a group of TxDOT's best engineers began designing the new bridge. They finished the work in just 15 days.

"This became job one," McCoy said. "Top priority for us."

McCoy says while it usually then takes a few years to build such a bridge, the new RM 2900 bridge will be built in just six months. Crews will work 24/7 to get it done. McCoy says they will also work through any rain or snow, and they'll also work on holidays.

"We asked them the question if they were willing to do this and the answer was a very very affirmative, 'yes.' These people will be giving up time with their families to make sure this bridge gets built correctly," McCoy said. "We're going to get it built as quickly as we can, and we're going to get it opened up, where people can return to their normal lives."

Construction crews are using two barges to help build the bridge. They're building from both sides at the same time, to help speed up the process.

At Friday's groundbreaking ceremony, dozens of Kingsland residents showed up to thank TxDOT engineers and their contracted construction workers.

"24/7 noise? Bring it on. We don't care. Just build it," Susan Patten laughed.

Patten is president of the Kingsland Chamber of Commerce, and she runs the Valentine Lodge with Pat Muller.

"It's a beautiful thing," Muller said of the construction noise. "We're not complaining about it a bit. It's the sound of progress to us."

Patten and Muller have a home on the other side of the bridge from Kingsland. Taking the bridge, it was only 15 minutes away. Without the bridge, it now takes a 50-minute detour to get there. The two plan to stay mostly at their lodge until the new bridge is finished.

During the flooding, they housed evacuees, and now they're housing some of the construction workers who've come in from out of state to work on the bridge.
Knowing the workers will miss Thanksgiving and Christmas with their families to get the job done, "We're going to do what we can to make them feel at home away from home," Patten said.

Patten and Muller say the workers' sacrifice is making a big difference for those in their community who desperately need the bridge.

"Where this really matters is that there are a lot of elderly over there, who, it's now harder for them to get to medical services. "It's harder for them to get to the grocery store," Patten said.

She says in the meantime, good neighbors have set up shopping groups that drive 50 minutes to buy groceries for elderly people who can't drive that far. Others are also pitching in to take seniors to their doctor's appointments.

TxDOT plans to open the new bridge, which will be higher and wider, in April.


Not all anniversaries are happy and Nov. 7 is one of the saddest of all. Since Nov. 7, 2000, at least one person has died on Texas roadways every single day. In an effort to end this deadly 18-year milestone, the Texas Department of Transportation, through its #EndTheStreakTX campaign, reminds drivers it’s a shared responsibility among roadway users and engineers to keep our roads safe.

“We all have the power to end the streak of daily deaths on Texas roadways,” said Texas Transportation Commissioner Laura Ryan. “Don’t drink and drive; put away the cell phone; buckle up; and obey traffic laws. Be the driver you would want next to you, in front of you or behind you. Together, we can end the streak.”
“It’s heartbreaking to know that every day for the past 18 years someone has lost a spouse, child, friend or neighbor on our state’s roadways,” said TxDOT Executive Director James Bass. “Ending this deadly daily streak is a shared responsibility. We will continue to engineer our roads to be more forgiving of drivers’ errors, but we all must work toward ending such preventable contributing factors as distracted driving, speeding and drunk driving. Let’s make it a priority to be safe, focused and responsible behind the wheel. Let’s end the streak.”

To help raise awareness of this tragic, daily statistic, TxDOT is asking people to share personal stories of loved ones lost in car crashes on their social media pages using photo and video testimonials with the hashtag, #EndTheStreakTX. The agency also will be posting startling statistics for the public to repost on social media outlets to help share this important message.

Since Nov. 7, 2000, fatalities resulting from vehicle crashes on Texas roadways have numbered more than 66,000. The leading causes of fatalities continue to be failure to stay in one lane, alcohol and speed. To decrease the chances of roadway crashes and fatalities, TxDOT reminds drivers to:

• Buckle seatbelts – all passengers need to be buckled
• Pay attention – put phone away and avoid distractions
• Never drink and drive – drunk driving kills; get a sober ride home
• Drive the speed limit – obey speed limits and drive slower when weather conditions warrant


**Nine counties get new form of emergency communication**

*Published November 2018 by Jim Williamson, Texarkana Gazette*

Another form of emergency communication was introduced Thursday to nine counties in Northeast Texas.

The new information is Text-to-9-1-1 and refers to the ability to send text messages to local 9-1-1 call centers during an emergency.

"Text-to-9-1-1 service allows citizens to send a text message directly to 9-1-1 for assistance in the event they are unable to make a voice call," said Rea Washington, program manager for the Ark-Tex Council of Governments during a press conference at the Bi-State Justice Building in Texarkana, Texas. Text-to-9-1-1 service is available in the following Texas counties in the Ark-Tex Council of Governments region: Bowie, Cass, Delta, Franklin, Hopkins, Lamar, Morris, Red River and Titus.
Text to 9-1-1 is a service that allows citizens to send a text message directly to 9-1-1 for assistance in the event they are unable to make a voice call, said Washington.

"Simply send a text as you would normally. In the recipient field enter 911, compose the message and push send. Once your text is sent, the 9-1-1 system will send an automated message asking the individual texting for the address of the emergency. This starts the text session between 9-1-1 and the individual needing emergency help," she said.

"It is important to remember that text to 9-1-1 services should only be used in an emergency situation, when someone is unable to speak. Examples include if the person is deaf, hard-of-hearing, speech impaired, or when speaking out loud would put the individual in danger. Text-to-9-1-1 also provides a silent alternative in cases such as a child abduction, active shooter or domestic abuse," Washington said.

When texting 9-1-1, know the exact location and the nature of the emergency.
"Use simple language and no abbreviations or slang. Do not text and drive. Pull over to a safe location before sending a text to 9-1-1. If you are able, call 9-1-1. It takes longer to get all the information when communicating through text messages," Washington said.

Currently you can only text-to-9-1-1 with the four major wireless carriers: AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile and Verizon Wireless.
If you are in an area where texting service is not available to 9-1-1, you will receive a 'bounce-back' message telling you to make a voice call.
For additional information about Text-to-9-1-1 contact Washington, at 903-255-3521 or email at rwashington@atcog.org. Also visit the cog's website at www.atcog.org.

Source:

Officials concerned not enough Central Texans signed up for emergency alert system
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As wildfires continue to tear through California, officials say deaths could have been minimized if more people signed up for the emergency alert system there. Here in Central Texas, even fewer people are signed up for a similar opt-in system, which leaves officials concerned ahead of the winter wildfire season.
According to an article from the Los Angeles Times, emergency officials say the lack of neighbors who had signed up for the emergency mobile alert system played a role in the deaths from the California wildfires. So far, the death toll sits around 80 people.

Warn Central Texas is the emergency mobile alert system that serves 10 counties here. According to the service, only 8.2 percent of all people who live in the area are signed up to receive the alerts on their cell phones.

In Paradise, one of the hardest-hit areas in California, less than 30 percent signed up for the alert system there.

"It is a concern because we want to be able to notify people quickly and give them as much information as possible to act in an appropriate manner," said Bastrop County Emergency Management Coordinator Brad Ellis.

Bastrop County is one of the Central Texas counties hardest hit by wildfires. In 2011, massive wildfires tore through more than 34,000 acres, killing two people and destroying more than 1,600 homes.

Dan Hugo is one Bastrop neighbor who had his home destroyed. He says he will never forget the destruction. "It wiped us out completely, along with a lot of other people. We lived in an RV for 9 months," Hugo said.

Hugo is one of the few Central Texans who has signed up for Warn Central Texas' mobile alerts. He says he is shocked more people are not signed up for this, especially considering the fact the 2011 wildfires are not too far in the rearview mirror. He knows neighbors who did not sign up. "When the fire came through, I wasn't home, but my neighbor was, and it had been burning for two hours, and he didn't know. He had no alerts, no nothing. The only way he found out was it got dark outside, and the fire was at his back door," Hugo said.

With winter wildfire season coming up, Ellis says he hopes more Central Texans sign up to get the mobile alerts. "We're not always going to be there immediately to tell you to get away during a wildfire. On occasion, we're going to have to rely upon notifying you by phone," Ellis said.

Warn Central Texas sends alerts to all landlines through an automated phone call. However, they worry so few people have landlines, instead relying on their cell phones. They not only send alerts for wildfires, but also for other emergency events like hurricanes and flooding.

You can [visit their website](http://WarnCentralTexas.org) to sign up for their mobile alerts.