



TEXAS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ONLINE

2015 Vol. 62 No. 11

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.

November 2016 Chief's Message

The first cold fronts that roll into Texas usually begin mid- to late-October. And they're usually welcome, since they break the summer's stifling heat and bring relief for those suffering under high summer humidity. But they should also serve as a cue to start our winter preparedness.

Winter Weather Awareness Day

Winter Weather Awareness Day in Texas is November 11, 2015. The last two winters in Texas have brought an icy chill to vast areas of the state. Hurricane force winds and record snowfall in some areas and layers of ice in others caused major power outages and closed roads, schools and businesses across the state, many for days.

There's an old saying, "It's better to have something and not need it, than to need something and not have it." Winter weather is more than inconvenient; it can be very dangerous. Each year, winter weather catches too many people unprepared. So every November we urge all Texans to take some time—maybe on Texas Winter Weather Awareness Day—to see how prepared you and your family are for dealing with possible severe winter weather.

Average temperatures in Texas are usually quite pleasant in November, and it's much easier to stock up on winter gear while the weather is nice and the crowds are small than when getting those supplies is a dire need. How long could you and your family survive at home if you were unable to get to a store?



How can you prepare? Add the following supplies to your home emergency supply kit:

- Rock salt or more environmentally safe products to melt ice on walkways
- Sand to improve traction
- Adequate clothing and blankets to keep you warm.

If you don't have an emergency supply kit, a checklist to build one is available at: [Texas Prepares Supply Kit](#).



Minimize travel. Winter Weather Awareness Day is a great opportunity to make sure your vehicles are winter ready. Keep a disaster supplies kit in all your vehicles. If you have to get out, keep in mind that as much as 70 percent of fatalities related to ice and snow occur in automobiles.

Be familiar with winter weather terminology. Do you know the difference between freezing rain and sleet, between a winter weather advisory and a winter storm warning?

We all know winter weather is coming, and the potential for severe winter weather is possible anywhere in Texas. Don't be caught off guard; prepare now.

Speaking of Needing Something ...

Got your flu shot yet? Influenza can be a dangerous, deadly disease. With few exceptions, the CDC recommends a flu shot for everyone over six months of age. And they recommend you get it early. Today there really are no excuses for not getting a flu shot; pharmacies and clinics all over the state welcome walk-ins for shots at little or no cost or wait. While you're on your way to your favorite grocery store or home improvement center to get supplies for your emergency kit, pop in and get your shot!

[Centers for Disease Control - Flu](#)
[TexasFlu.org](#)

Influenza (The Flu)

Influenza (also known as the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by flu viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Anyone can get the flu (even healthy people), and serious problems related to the flu can happen at any age, but some people are at high risk of developing serious flu-related complications if they get sick. This includes people 65 years and older, people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease), pregnant women and young children. The flu also can make chronic health problems worse. For example, people with asthma may experience asthma attacks while they have the flu, and people with chronic congestive heart failure may experience a worsening of this condition that is triggered by the flu.



Most people who get the flu will have mild illness, will not need medical care or antiviral drugs, and will recover in less than two weeks. Some people, however, are more likely to get flu complications that result in being hospitalized and, occasionally, result in death. Pneumonia, bronchitis, sinus infections and ear infections are examples of flu-related complications.

The best way to prevent the flu is by getting vaccinated each year.



The Flu is Contagious

Most healthy adults may be able to infect other people beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to five to seven days after becoming sick. Children may pass the virus for longer than seven days. Symptoms start one to four days after the virus enters the body. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick. Some people can be infected with the flu virus but have no symptoms. During this time, those persons may still spread the virus to others.

People with flu can spread it to others up to about six feet away. Most experts think that flu viruses are spread mainly by droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Less often, a person might also get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth or nose.

To avoid this, people should stay away from sick people and stay home if sick. It also is important to wash hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand rub. Linens, eating utensils and dishes belonging to those who are sick should not be shared without washing thoroughly first. Eating utensils can be washed either in a dishwasher or by hand with water and soap and do not need to be cleaned separately. Further, frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected at home, work and school, especially if someone is ill.

The flu is different from a cold. The flu usually comes on suddenly. People who have the flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- Fever* or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough

- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

**It's important to note that not everyone with flu will have a fever.*

People who should talk to their doctor before getting the flu shot:

- If you have an allergy to eggs or any of the ingredients in the vaccine, talk to your doctor about your allergy.
- If you ever had Guillain-Barré Syndrome (a severe paralyzing illness, also called GBS), talk to your doctor about your GBS history. Some people with a history of GBS should not get this vaccine.
- If you are not feeling well, talk to your doctor about your symptoms.

Trivalent formulations of the influenza vaccine for the 2015-2016 season will include an A/California/7/2009 (H1N1) pdm09-like virus, an A/Switzerland/9715293/2013 (H3N2)-like virus, and a B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus (B/Yamagata lineage). Quadrivalent formulations of the 2015-2016 influenza vaccine will include a B/Brisbane/60/2008-like virus in addition to the three virus components that are included in the trivalent formulation. Global laboratory surveillance for influenza viruses is the basis for changing one or more of the vaccine strains each year.

Influenza is a year-round health threat. Flu reporting season in the United States officially begins in October and continues through May. In Texas, flu activity usually peaks in January with high activity continuing through February, although peak flu activity has occurred as early as October.

Children with influenza are required to be excluded from school or daycare for at least 24 hours after fever has subsided without fever-reducing medication. Adults should not return to work for 24 hours after fever has subsided without fever-reducing medication.

Individual cases of influenza are not reportable by law in Texas. State, regional and local health departments rely on volunteer clinics, hospitals, laboratories and others to report influenza data throughout the season. However, there are situations where influenza becomes reportable by state law. These situations are:

Influenza-associated pediatric mortality cases are reportable within one working day.

- Novel or variant influenza cases are reportable immediately.
- Influenza-like illness (ILI) and influenza-associated outbreaks in any setting are reportable immediately.
- All influenza-associated pediatric mortality cases, novel/variant influenza cases, and ILI/influenza-associated outbreaks should be reported to the local health department or health service region.

Several Texas laws require specific information regarding notifiable conditions be provided to the Texas Department of State Health Services. Health care providers, hospitals, laboratories, schools and others are required to report patients who are suspected of having a notifiable condition.

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/Flu](#)
[Texas Department of State Health Services/Influenza](#)

Waking up to Wildfire and the Journey to Become Rapidly Fire Adapted

The 2011 Wildfire season marked the dawn of wildfire awareness in the city of Austin and communities across Travis County. Two destructive wildfires in particular painted a daunting picture of the threat fire in the Wildland Urban Interface poses to our communities: the Pinnacle fire—juxtaposed with the Austin Community College high-rise looming in the background, which ultimately served as the incident command post—and the Steiner Ranch fire in a large subdivision on the outskirts of the Austin city limits. Both fires averaged around 100 acres and were relatively small in size, but resulted in significant loss of homes and natural resources and caused major evacuations in the area. More jarring was the fact that the fires quickly transitioned to an urban conflagration, where homes ignited adjacent structures and, more insidiously, homes blocks away from the main fire.



These fires led to a multiyear, multifaceted project to address wildland fire safety in Austin-Travis County. Wildfire Division Program Director Justice Jones said, "It's not a matter of if, but rather when the next wildfire will occur, and it's the steps you take now to prepare that will matter most when the next firestorm occurs."

In 2013, the Austin Fire Department (AFD) along with federal, state and local partners, developed the first Travis Countywide Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), a plan specifically designed to reduce wildland fire risk according to the needs of Austin-Travis County. From this plan, a risk management approach was adopted, including firefighter training and community education. For example, all AFD firefighters are now certified in wildland firefighting techniques.

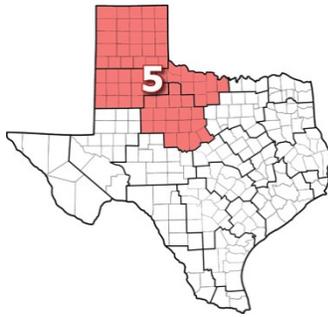


In addition, two national programs were promoted by AFD and its partners to educate the Austin-Travis County community on fire prevention and protection: Ready, Set, Go! and Firewise. Ready Set Go provides a model for individual and family wildfire preparedness, and Firewise principles instruct communities about specific emergency plans and property protection measures that can be used to enhance a community's wildfire resiliency. A combination of these programs with town hall meetings resulted in Austin-Travis County leading the state in the number of Firewise communities in the United States. In order to assist

other communities in their process of becoming Firewise and to create a multiplier effect among communities working to reduce their collective risk, Austin Firewise communities united in 2013 to form the Austin Firewise Alliance.

The goal of wildland fire efforts in Austin-Travis County is to have a prepared and informed community and a fire department that responds efficiently and safely in the event of a wildland fire. Extensive training and educational events available to the local firefighters and community have resulted in Austin-Travis County becoming a Fire Adaptive Community model replicable to other communities. Partnerships, cooperation, technical expertise, education, action and funding have enabled the success of this project. Wildfire doesn't respect boundaries, so the safer the individual the safer the community. As they say in Austin, "Wildfire is everyone's fight."

Region 5 Winter Weather Preparedness



Texas DPS Region 5

Due to a strong El Niño weather pattern, the National Weather Service is predicting a wetter and colder than normal winter for Texas. A wetter and colder winter could mean more snow, more ice or maybe just more rain. In Region 5, we might see just light rain or a six-inch sheet of ice, and blizzard conditions have not been uncommon lately in the Panhandle. It will all depend on the timing of the cold air mixing with the moisture.

Disaster District Committee (DDC) Partnerships

The last two winters for much of Texas have been quite severe. The DDCs in Texas Department of Public

Safety Region 5 are preparing for the upcoming winter by conducting exercises, holding meetings and updating contact lists. In Region 5 we held a region wide tabletop exercise to role play the possible worst-case winter weather scenarios with Texas Highway Patrol, Texas A&M Forest Service, Texas Department of Transportation, The American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, local utility co-ops, the regional state coordinator and district coordinators along with the National Weather Service.



In each of the four disaster districts, we will continue to hold numerous meetings to review winter weather activities pre-impact, during impact, and the potential support needs for each agency. These meetings will cover participants from the local jurisdictions reaching out to surrounding states, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana. During these meetings, we discuss the coordination and cooperation plans for dealing with a severe winter event as it is happening, and we can share eyes-on information of what the storm is bringing.

Through other DDC meetings, we reach out to our state partners on a quarterly basis to make sure all contact information is up to date and we know who we are working with.

Region 5 also conducted an ESF-8 meeting/tabletop exercise to discuss medical issues during a severe winter event. Some of the issues discussed were staffing needs and having adequate fuel supplies for backup generators at medical facilities.

The [Texas Military Forces](#) is a valuable asset during severe weather events. The Texas Military Forces is composed of the three branches of the military in the state of Texas. These branches are the Texas Army National Guard, the Texas Air National Guard, and the Texas State Guard. We can call on the Army National Guard for a number of different force packages, such as high-profile vehicles and Humvees along with the personnel and support needed. We also use the Texas State Guard for DDC support and in shelter operations.

Disaster District Committee (DDC) Preparedness

The DDCs have a growing list of disaster response equipment at hand, including backup power generators at most offices, and all of it is tested regularly. We build in redundancy in all of our communication equipment and can convene regional meetings through our Video Teleconferencing System (VTC). Whether high winds or ice cause power outages or blizzard conditions shut down businesses, schools and roads, Field Response staff at the DDCs will be ready to minimize the impact of a severe winter weather event and get Texans back on line, back to school and work and back on the road.



November 2015: Credits

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