



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 – March 2016

“In Like a Lion ...”

Most everyone is familiar with the adage, “March comes in like a lion, but goes out like a lamb.” In Texas, March is typically only the beginning of several months of increased potential for dangerous and recurring severe weather.

March 1 is the beginning of Spring Season Weather Safety, and it’s an excellent time to encourage everyone to invest a little time to focus on springtime emergency and disaster preparedness. While much of the state could still experience freezing temperatures, most of Texas will be quickly warming up, creating the prevalent conditions that so often produce severe weather this time of year.



Tornado damage.

hail, flash floods and lightning are all dangerous and destructive weather events that are likely to occur in Texas, especially in the spring. One of your first steps to preparing for severe weather is to build an [Emergency Supply Kit](#). If you already have one, take the time now to inspect your inventory. You should also be making or reviewing your family communications plan.

Nothing exemplifies severe weather quite like a tornado, and over the past fifty years or so, the spring months—March, April and May—have produced more tornadoes in Texas than any other time of year. By far. Since 1900, the deadliest tornadoes in Texas history have occurred in April and May. The time to take account of your planning and preparedness is now, not when the probability and potential for severe weather is high.

But tornadoes are not the only threat brought on by severe weather. Straight line winds,



Jason Dush, TDEM demonstrating how to create an emergency supply kit.

Another important way to prepare is to review your knowledge about severe weather. Do you know where to get developing information during severe weather? What if you lose power or if your cellular service? Do you know the difference between a watch and a warning? Do you know where to take shelter and what places to avoid? Don't wait until severe weather is imminent. Take the time to prepare now.

Register now for the 2016 Texas Emergency Management Conference!

If you haven't already, it's time to register for the [2016 Texas Emergency Management Conference](#). It's coming earlier this year! This conference will be held Tuesday, April 5 through Friday, April 8 at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center in San Antonio.

Each year thousands of emergency management and law enforcement professionals, local elected officials, private sector partners, first responders, voluntary organizations and many others from across the state come together for this premier event. In addition to a full spectrum of emergency management-related workshops and trainings, this year the conference will include a track of family-oriented safety and preparedness workshops as well. And, of course, we will showcase exhibits from a wide array of vendors in the brand new exhibit hall the Gonzalez conference center.

More information about the conference, including registration, workshops and exhibit opportunities can be found by visiting the [2016 Texas Emergency Management Conference](#) webpage.

Take the time to invest in you and the future of your community. Register today. I look forward to seeing you in San Antonio.

[Be Prepared. Make a Plan](#)
[Weather Ready Nation](#)
[NWS Severe Weather Safety](#)

Behind The Wildfire: The Hub of Information

Battling intense flames, digging a fireline or saving a structure from sure destruction easily come to mind when thinking of a Texas wildfire, but out of sight from those on the frontlines are behind-the-scenes key players ensuring that the management of a suppression runs smoothly for all involved. These unsung heroes are the men and women of Texas A&M Forest Service's Emergency Operations Center (EOC).



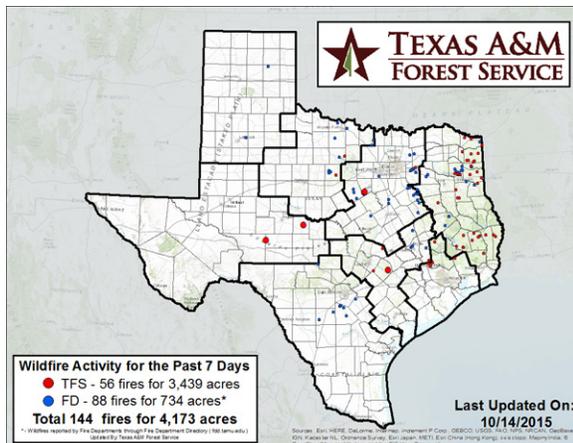
Aerial view of Hidden Pines fire near Bastrop, October 2015.

Picture a large room where TV and computer monitors line the walls. The latest news flashes on one screen, on another a large map of Texas shows the latest wildfires burning across the state while another gives the latest weather developments. In the center of the room sits a large conference table surrounded by agency leaders and emergency responders conducting an operations briefing on the latest incidents and discussing their next moves.

This is likely the scene you'll see in the EOC during any given wildfire season.

During a wildfire season, the EOC functions as the hub of information for the agency. EOC personnel work day and night collecting fire information, photos, tracking resources and fact checking information to make sure agency leaders are informed of what's going on, especially when the state is affected by multiple incidents.

Maps



Maps outline wildfire boundaries and show the location of agency resources, helping keep leadership well-informed during wildfire seasons.

While making maps may sound dated, Geospatial Specialist Jordan Smith explains that map-making is a modern cutting-edge feat of precision. Smith's job plays an integral support role in managing an incident.

Most of Smith's day-to-day duties consist of gathering data and making and editing maps. During a wildfire season his normally tedious duties become more crucial.

"This summer was my first fire season with TFS. Usually you hear, 'I hope this isn't another '11' or 'This looks like another '08,'" Smith said. "This puts you on edge a little and you start to pay more attention to the fires and media coverage so that you're on top of things."

After TFS resources have a good hold on a fire, Smith sets out to map it. Mapping a wildfire can be done two ways, by walking the fire — if the lines are safe — or flying the perimeter. Both use GPS tracking, but flying the fire also gives Smith the opportunity to get aerial photos — increasing the map's accuracy. From there the maps are shared with state leadership to give them a better understanding of the size and direction of the fire. By analyzing the map, leadership can decide if and where more resources are needed.

While Smith admits his job may not seem like the most interesting, the benefits his products provide make his job worth it. "It's rewarding to see and know that anything I do directly helps people on the line making those big decisions," Smith said.

Monitoring state resources

Through intelligence gathered during wildfire activity, members of the EOC, like EOC Specialist Lance Isenhour provide a valuable service to help manage incidents.

“While we do not influence how the fire is fought, we do have influence on how resources are allocated. This is accomplished by providing decision-makers with the ‘big picture’ and giving them the information they need to make educated and responsible decisions,” Isenhour said.

During heightened activity, the normal EOC staff nearly doubles as select personnel take on additional duties to help with the flow of information. Regular 8 to 5s turn into 10- to 16-hour shifts. Busy with situation reports, mobilization of resources, tracking aircraft and coordinating with resource vendors, Program Coordinator Shawn Whitley understands the importance of the EOC.

“The EOC is supposed to keep a strategic mindset of the entire state and provide support to the field. We have to look at the big picture, immediate and long range,” Whitley said.

Tying in with the state

While the EOC mainly focuses on keeping state leadership informed and monitoring resources during a wildfire, the agency also connects with the Texas Division of Emergency Management’s State Operations Center (SOC) to provide resources that can be used in all-hazard incidents.

Texas A&M Forest Service offers motor graders for snow removal, chainsaw crews and coordinate incident management teams throughout the state.

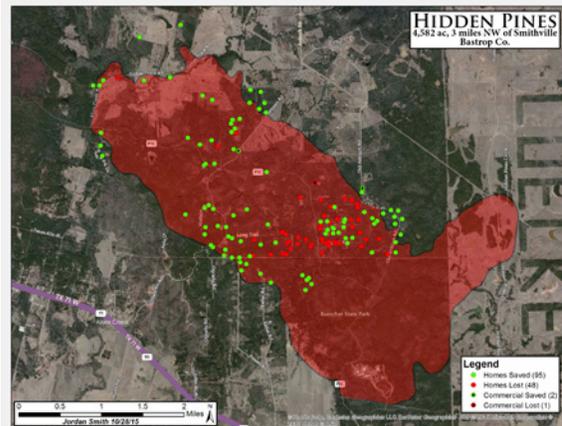
Once an incident has grown in complexity beyond what regional resources can handle, the SOC can order these additional resources through the EOC.

The agency further supports the SOC by having one full-time position staffed at the center, easily facilitating the flow of information between the two entities. When a large disaster occurs, the agency will provide several staff members to support the operations center.

This tie-in helps paint a clear statewide picture, showing how interagency partnerships work together to more effectively manage incidents.

Information hub

Whether during a busy fire season or if someone happens to stop by on a random day, the EOC has no shortage of visitors who are getting fire updates, requesting maps or watching the giant monitors lining the walls. While the staff may not be on the frontlines, their jobs provide valuable insight for the leaders making decisions that help to better protect lives and property.



Map of properties saved or lost during the Hidden Pines fire.

DPS Capitol Complex TECC Training

Last year, a Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) trooper was credited with saving the life of a sergeant who had been shot high in his leg. The DPS sergeant—who had attended Tactical Emergency Casualty Care (TECC) training at DPS less than a year before the incident—remained calm and gave instructions on the application of a tourniquet as well as other medical care rendered while an ambulance was on route to the scene. In 2014, seven Texas law enforcement officers' lives were saved due to the deployment and application of tourniquets to themselves or by other officers. A law enforcement officer may only have a few minutes to deploy and properly apply a tourniquet in order to save his or her own life or the life of a partner or civilian.

As the number of high threat operations confronted by law enforcement officers increases, ensuring they are well-trained for not only dealing with threats, but also managing the injuries they and fellow officers may receive becomes more and more critical. Law enforcement tactical training under various operational scenarios is ever-changing and evolving. One of the challenges being addressed by progressive new training is teaching law enforcement officers how to deploy medical care in a high-threat environment where no medical professionals are on hand.

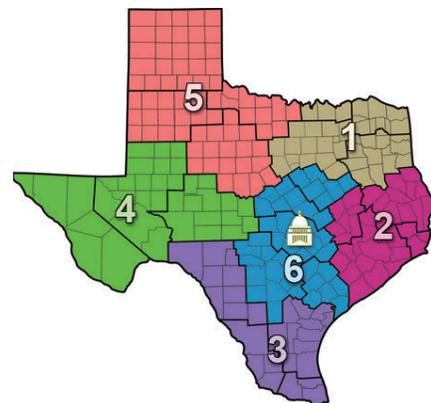
The Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) along with the DPS' Education, Training and Research (ETR) Division implemented a First Responders Program, designed to train commissioned officers to render emergency medical care to civilians, to other officers and to themselves until medical professionals arrive. Over a two-week period during January and February, DPS Region 7 (Capitol Complex) conducted TECC training for all of the troopers and a large portion of security officers who are stationed at the state Capitol.

All together approximately 130 troopers and security officers were trained on how to provide direct pressure to immediately stop critical bleeding, tourniquet application and pressure bandaging all while working in a high-threat environment. The course focused on training troopers and security



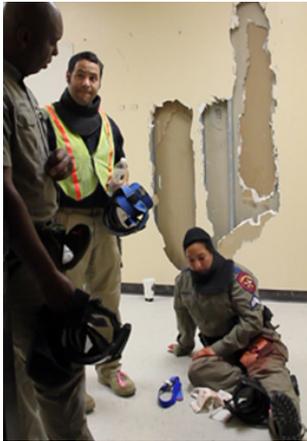
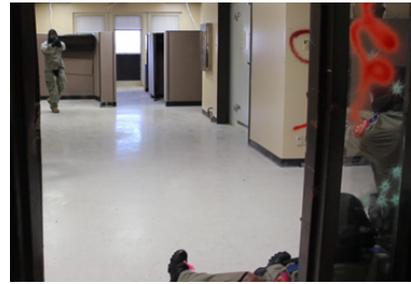
officers how to mitigate the threat and administer lifesaving skills to themselves, a fellow officers and coworkers who have received some type of penetrating trauma to vital areas of the body that requires immediate attention. The students experienced the training in various realistic environments that duplicated the stress level of managing themselves or another person when severely injured. By the end of each session, the students had demonstrated the confidence and competence of deploying the skills learned from the class. They received 20 hours of combined TECC (16 hours) and medical training (4 hours) over each two-day class.

Through a collaborative effort with the senior leadership of Region 7, ETR and TDEM Emergency Medical Services, this training supported a unified effort to ensure that these critical skills are considered a priority and provided to troopers and security staff in Region 7. The goal was to enhance emergency medical care at the Capitol by combining the comprehensive training principles of TECC guidelines along with additional emergency medical training presented in realistic settings.



The DPS Regions. Region 7 (Capitol Complex) is the state capitol along with the surrounding buildings.

Tactical Emergency Medical Care



Clockwise from upper left: Treating wounded civilian and officer in the field; high threat situation; active shooter scenario; treating officer in a stairwell; after incident briefing.

Texas Division of Emergency Management and FEMA Corps



The Department of Homeland Security-Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) launched an innovative partnership that established a FEMA-devoted unit of 1,600 service corps members within AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps). Solely devoted to emergency preparedness, response and recovery, FEMA Corps members focus on disaster preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery activities.

FEMA Corps is an innovative take on combining the strength of civil society programs with emergency management. Young adults between the ages of 18-24 join FEMA Corps seeking to gain training and experience while contributing to public and civic service. They serve for 10 months and have an option to enlist for a second term.

FEMA Corps member provide a range of disaster support. They work directly with disaster survivors, support disaster recovery centers as well as share valuable disaster preparedness and mitigation information with the public. The Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) partnered with FEMA Region VI on an assignment that offered these enthusiastic teams essential emergency management experience at the state level.

FEMA Corps Green Two, a specialized logistics team of seven members, was assigned to TDEM from August 3, 2015 to November 5, 2015. The team was instrumental with completing several logistics projects, such as analyzing resource requests from previous emergencies, developing a logistics resource catalog, standardizing an inventory management system and developing a training presentation on how to create comprehensive resource requests. But the most notable project was a complete reconfiguration of the emergency commodities stored at the TDEM warehouse in Lufkin, Texas. Fortunately, a second FEMA Corps team, Gulf Two, was assigned to TDEM and joined the warehouse project. The initial plan was to reorganize approximately 300 pallets of commodities, conduct a physical inventory of all items and update the electronic inventory management system. At least that was the plan ...

Original Schedule of Events and Objectives

1. Monday, November 2
 - A. Conduct warehouse tour and orientation
 - B. Conduct safety and training briefing
 - C. Conduct Material Handling Equipment orientation and training
2. Tuesday, November 3
 - A. Conduct warehouse operations (organize commodities)
 - B. Validate the inventory management system information
3. Wednesday, November 4
 - A. Conduct warehouse operations (organize commodities)
 - B. Validate the inventory management system information
4. Thursday, November 5
 - A. Complete warehouse operations
 - B. Conduct final IMS validation
 - C. Conduct final clean-up of TDEM space

Upon entering the warehouse, it was observed that all TDEM managed assets had been moved from their last known location in the facility to a completely different area of the 200,000 square foot warehouse. This move negated all previous organization and inventory efforts, causing the team to adjust the plan. Instead of handling about half of the inventory, the team would have to handle all of it.

November 2, 2015



This is what the Logistics Team walked into.

The process took considerable effort since the pallets were all mixed up, some needed replacement pallets, others needed items reconfigured and/or consolidated, and others needed to be completely rebuilt. The first day produces significant results, with 12 groups of 20 pallets positioned for immediate use.

November 4, 2015



Pallets were sorted by size and prepared for placement in same-sized groups.

the lights. The warehouse mission was complete.

Day one: The warehouse tour and orientation were completed, and FEMA Corps Green Two provided FEMA Corps Gulf Two a warehouse operations and safety briefing. The first day concluded with hands-on pallet jack training to get familiar with the commodities being organized.

November 3, 2015

Day two: The teams got fully immersed in the project. The Operations Officer Miriam Moran quickly devised a plan to stage, organize by size, position, and inventory all the TDEM

owned items in the warehouse.



Rachel and Feliciano (Left) and Emarah and Leslie (Right) practice with the pallet jacks.

Day three: The teams continued with warehouse operations and

successfully completed around 90 percent of the reconfiguration. The inventory management specialists completed a 100 percent inspection of the electronic system as well as physically verifying the items.

November 5, 2015

Day four: The teams put the final touches on the warehouse project by completing the final 10 percent of the reconfiguration. They cleaned up the area, disposed of all the unserviceable pallets and turned off



Panoramic picture of the completed inventory reorganization at the TDEM-Lufkin warehouse.



This picture illustrates the precision achieved by the Logistics Team.



FEMA Corps Gulf 2 pictured on the left with FEMA Corps Green 2 on the right.



Wade Parks, Logistics Section Coordinator pictured with Green 2.

March News Briefs

2015 Severe Weather Long-Term Recovery Update



Texas received another presidential disaster declaration, DR-4245-TX, for 16 counties for Individual Assistance from the October 2015 severe weather which has resulted in over 9,500 registrations for assistance. As a result, over \$18 million has been approved for Individuals and Households assistance and over \$15 million approved in U.S. Small Business Administration home and business disaster loans. Texas Division of Emergency Management Human Services staff have been working diligently at the joint field office (JFO) and in the field to assist disaster survivors in their recovery from this disaster.

For the May Severe weather disaster declaration, DR-4223-TX, over \$56 million has been approved for Individuals and Households assistance and \$96 million has been approved in U.S. Small Business Administration home and business disaster loans. Disaster case management funds were just awarded for DR-4223-TX and the state case management program will be fully implemented in March.

Firewise Landscaping

As the population of so many Texas cities continues to rapidly increase, many people are living in areas that not too long ago were either rural or wildlands. The threat of urban wildfire is becoming more and more common. A record amount of rainfall for much of Texas in 2015 created a favorable environment for a considerable vegetation growth that now has begun to dry out due to a very fairly rain free first quarter in 2016. Many counties around the state are initiating burn bans as the threat of wildfire increases.



The landscape surrounding a house can become fuel for a wildfire. Vegetation to encourage wildlife or to enhance water or energy conservation goals can be included in a firewise landscape as long as the defensible space is maintained.

Decks and siding easily can ignite when plants that burn quickly and produce high heat are placed adjacent to the home. A burning plant or group of plants in front of windows can cause glass breakage allowing fire to enter the home. Taller flames adjacent to the home can enter through the soffits. These flames may reach combustible materials and cause material failure, such as gutter or siding that melts, exposing the wood.

Fire can get into the crowns of trees if plants are layered in such a way that the fire climbs into the treetops. When flames burn through the canopy, intense heat and embers are given off. This causes burning materials to fall on the roof and surrounding vegetation.

Plants placed so that a fire can spread to your home increase the chance of your home receiving direct flame and embers as the fire spreads. Your home is a continuation of the fuel. Creating "defensible space" will greatly reduce your home's risk to wildfire.

While there is no "fireproof" plant, there are plant characteristics to consider when planning a firewise yard or landscape. The characteristics can be separated into the following two groups:

1. Fire resistance defines how readily a plant will catch fire (ignitability).
2. Growth characteristics describe the amount of vegetation that is present.

Create a defensible space around your home or business by creating zones that contain plants with certain fire resistant characteristics along with spacing ideas and key maintenance considerations to make your yard or landscape firewise.

For more information, read the pdf document, [Firewise Landscaping in Texas](#) and visit the Texas A&M Forest Service Web page about [Fire Danger: Wildfire Risk](#).

Car Seat Safety Tips



Road injuries are the leading cause of preventable deaths and injuries to children in the United States. Correctly used child safety seats can reduce the risk of death by as much as 71 percent. Unfortunately, according to SafeKids, 73 percent of car seats are not used or installed correctly.

Don't just assume that your child's car seat is installed correctly. Take a few minutes to make sure it's road ready:

Right Seat. Make sure it's the right seat for your child's age, weight and height. Check the expiration date of your seat. (Yes, it has one!) Check the label.

Right Place. Children should be in the back seat, at least until they're thirteen.

Right Direction. Children two and under should be facing backward.

Inch Test. Once your seat is installed, make sure it's snug.

Can it move one inch to the side or from front to back?

Read the instruction to your seat and to your vehicle about proper and safe installation. If someone else is taking your child somewhere in their vehicle, make sure they know how to properly install and test the car seat.

Set a good example. Buckle up for every ride, and be sure everyone in your vehicle buckles up, too.

Take a photo of your car seat label and save it to your phone so you can have it handy.

Finally, never leave your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. The temperature inside your car can rise 20 degrees and cause heatstroke in the time it takes for you to run in and out of a store.

For more information about car seat safety, visit the [Safe Kids Worldwide](#) website.

Suicide Prevention



Every year millions of Americans are affected by suicide. Each year nearly 43,000 Americans die by suicide. For every suicide, there are 25 attempts. Although females attempt suicide three times more often than males, males are more likely to die from suicide. Suicide is highest in middle age, especially among white males. But suicide is preventable.

Risk factors of suicide are often confused with warning signs. Risk factors are characteristics that make it more likely that an individual will consider, attempt or die by suicide. Some risk factors include:

- Mental disorders
- Alcohol and substance abuse
- Previous suicide attempt
- Family history of suicide
- Loss of a relationship
- Lack of social support and sense of isolation

Warning signs of suicide are behaviors to recognize if someone is contemplating suicide. If you know someone who is exhibiting any of these signs, seek help as soon as possible.

Possible warning signs include:

- Talking about wanting to kill themselves
- Talking about feeling trapped
- Talking about being a burden to others
- Withdrawing or isolating themselves
- Calling people to say good-bye
- Giving away prized possessions

Survivors of those who take their own lives often struggle with profound feelings of guilt, grief, anger and disbelief. Survivors often feel they should have been able to prevent a suicide or should have better recognized the signs.

Dealing with a suicide can be traumatic for children, and parents might think they're helping by not talking about it or rushing them to move past it. When explaining suicide to a child or adolescent, reassure them that they are not responsible and it was nothing they did or said that caused someone to take their own life. With people who have experienced suicide, be prepared to talk about it with them often, especially in the first days and weeks following the event.

Grief from suicide is complex and often misunderstood. But help is available.

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#)

[American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)

March 2016: Credits

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