



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 – May 2016

June Chief's Message

June 1 marks the beginning of the Atlantic hurricane season. Packed with the potential for a powerful storm surge, high winds, tornadoes and flooding, a hurricane can devastate coastal areas as well as severely impact vast areas hundreds of miles inland. When Tropical Storm Bill came ashore in 2015, we were reminded us that it doesn't take a major storm to cause considerable damage to widespread areas, especially when they're already saturated from extensive amounts of rain and overflowing rivers.

As we begin this hurricane season, much of Texas has experienced recurring heavy rainfall. The major rivers in Texas are flowing to the Gulf at high levels and many lakes and reservoirs across the state are full. One ill-timed storm could cause widespread devastation to vast areas in Texas where flood recovery from previous severe weather is still on-going.



International Space Station view of Tropical Storm Bill

#ItOnlyTakesOne

In preparation for hurricane season, the National Weather Service sponsored Hurricane Preparedness Week from May 15 through May 21. Each day featured an important hurricane preparedness topic for everyone to review and act on. If you missed it or just need a refresher, these are the hurricane season preparedness topics:

- Determine Your Risk
- Develop an Evacuation Plan
- Secure an Insurance Check-up
- Assemble disaster supplies
- Strengthen Your Home
- Identify Trusted Sources of Information

- Complete a Written Plan



[Aftermath of Hurricane Ike](#)

These important aspects of being prepared are critical to know and follow during hurricane season and for the many other types of severe weather we experience in Texas. For example, many homeowners and renters falsely believe they're covered by flood insurance under standard insurance policies. Know your risk for flooding and review your policy with your agent at least once a year to make sure you're adequately covered. Don't forget your vehicles.

Thousands of first responders and emergency managers across Texas are committed to keeping Texans safe during severe weather events, and they will be prepared if tropical storms threaten our coastal areas during this hurricane season. You can help by taking the time now to assess your readiness for these potentially dangerous storms.

[Hurricane Preparedness](#)

[Hurricane Awareness](#)

[Emergency Supply Kits](#)

[Texas Department of Insurance - StormLink Resource Page](#)

Mart High School Teen CERT Member Announced for National Youth Preparedness Council



In May the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) headquarters announced that Chandler Villa, a 17-year-old member of the Mart High School Teen Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), has been selected to represent FEMA Region VI on the National Youth Preparedness Council. She will represent the states of Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and New Mexico for matters concerning youth preparedness. She will also be implementing youth preparedness education locally as a service project.

Her nomination comes on the heels of the Heart of Texas Council of Governments (HOTCOG) involvement with the FEMA's Region VI Citizen Corps Working Group. Originally, Chandler did not meet the requirements—she was a high school junior rather than a freshman or sophomore. However, FEMA headquarters accepted her nomination and she was selected for the position. This will be a great opportunity to build on the efforts of Mart High School's youth preparedness activities as well as the regional Citizen Corps program as a whole.

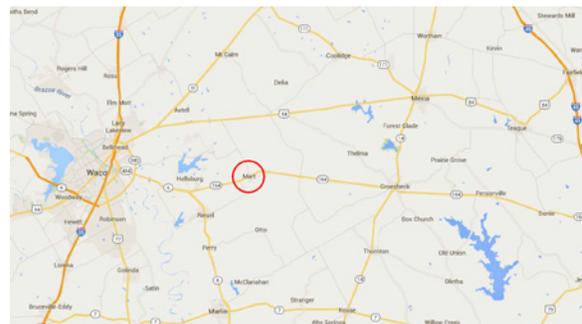
Chandler first got involved with the Mart High School Teen CERT a year ago after talking to some of her teachers about it. She is currently a leader in Mart High School's Student Activities and Government (SAG) and Secretary of the Mart High School National Honor Society. She is also a member of the school's University Interscholastic League Journalism Team, yearbook staff and the golf team.

While involved with Mart High School's Teen CERT, Chandler deployed during the Marlin Water Crisis in December 2015 by distributing water to impacted residents of the community.

Her experiences in the Teen CERT program also allowed her the opportunity to conduct public education events in her own community and the communities surrounding Mart. Other team activities included ride along training with paramedics.

Chandler is driven to serve others and maintains an interest in the medical field. Villa has plans to continue her education in the medical field. She has an interest in becoming an Emergency Medical Technician and perhaps study to be a nurse and physician assistant in college. She credits the CERT experience with teaching her more about herself.

The CERT was recognized for their accomplishments last year. The group received honorable mentions in two categories of the 2015 FEMA Individual and Community Preparedness Awards: Outstanding Achievement in Youth Preparedness and Outstanding CERT.



National Youth Preparedness Council

Created in 2012, the National Youth Preparedness Council brings together youth leaders from across the country who are interested in preparedness and making a difference in their communities. Council members will also complete preparedness projects.

Chandler will take part in the Youth Preparedness Council Summit July 19-20, 2016, in Washington, D.C.

The summit gives members the opportunity to share their ideas and questions with national organizations. The students will have an opportunity to plan their legacy project. The council will also meet with FEMA community preparedness staff, who will serve as their ongoing support mentors.

The council supports FEMA's commitment to involve youth in preparedness-related activities. It also provides an avenue to engage youth by taking into account their perspectives, feedback and opinions.

HOTCOG on [Facebook](#)

HOTCOG on [Twitter](#)

[FEMA Press Release](#)

More about the [2016 Youth Preparedness Council](#)

What Happens in the State Operations Center?

This is the first of a series of articles about the State Operations Center, the professionals who staff it and its role in protecting Texans before and during disasters.

Prior to 1950, disaster relief and recovery in Texas was essentially left up to local jurisdictions, but after a series of major disasters, including the [New London school disaster](#) in 1937 and the Texas City explosion in 1947, it became apparent that disaster preparedness, response, mitigation and recovery needed a central organization to support the efforts of local governments.

From droughts to floods and hurricanes to wildfires, Texas is home to some of the most extreme and dangerous weather conditions of any state. The State Operations Center (SOC), located at the Texas Department of Public Safety headquarters in Austin, is the cornerstone of Texas' emergency management system.



Construction of the [SOC](#) began in 1962, and, due to tensions of the Cold War, the entire structure was contained within a shock absorbing concrete box and buried deep in the limestone and caliche of north central Austin. Protected by large, steel blast doors, the structure was designed to withstand the nearby hit of a 20-megaton nuclear blast.

The SOC serves as the state warning point and primary state direction and control facility, and is managed and staffed by the Operations Section of the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM)

during its normal operations, which is 24 hours a day and seven days a week. The Daily Operations staff monitors threats, makes notification of threats, provides information on emergency incidents to local, state and federal officials and coordinates assistance requests from local governments through the DPS District offices. In addition, Daily Operations also manages the AMBER Alert, Silver Alert, Blue Alert and Missing and Endangered Persons Alert [programs](#). In a typical year the SOC Daily Operations coordinates 3,000 to 4,000 local incidents.

The SOC also coordinates state emergency assistance to local governments that have experienced an emergency situation and can no longer support the emergency locally or with local mutual aid.

During major emergencies and disasters, TDEM staff along with agencies and volunteer organizations that make up the state Emergency Management Council and federal liaison teams convene at the SOC to identify, mobilize and deploy state and voluntary agency resources to respond to the emergency or disaster.

SOC Readiness Levels

Many emergencies follow a recognizable build-up period during which actions can be taken to achieve a gradually increasing state of readiness. The following readiness levels are used as a means of increasing a jurisdiction's readiness status.

Level IV

Normal Conditions

No significant emergency is present. Daily Operations continues to conduct normal business and monitors the state for any natural and technological threats. Local responders resolve emergency incidents that might occur in their areas.

Typical Events: Daily emergency responses, high profile visitor(s), weather and threat monitoring and notification. Processes requests for assistance from local jurisdictions when

they are impacted by local/regional emergency or disaster events when requested by the Disaster District and when the SOC is not at an increased readiness level.

Typical Notification: TDEM staff, emergency management coordinators and directors, fire departments/EMS, law enforcement, public works.

Level III

Increased Readiness

A higher than normal level of readiness is warranted because of increased vulnerability to a specific hazard or an emergency event has occurred that may require some assistance from the state. Requests for mutual aid resources for emergency assistance may be received and/or requested. Advisory notifications are sent to the Emergency Management Council, DPS Disaster Districts and appropriate officials and agency representatives are briefed on anticipated risk situations and potential impacts. Coordination activities may increase and selected Emergency Management Council agencies and organizations may respond to the event.



Typical Events: Tropical weather system developing in area, widespread flash flooding, increased fire conditions, escalating or immediate risk to impact area(s).

Typical Notification: TDEM staff, DPS Disaster Districts, emergency management coordinators and directors, fire departments/EMS, law enforcement, public works, Emergency Management Council and public information office.

Level II

Escalated Response Conditions

The scope of the emergency has expanded beyond that which can be handled by local responders and normal state and local government operations may be impaired. Emergency facilities increase staffing, expand hours of operation and intensify coordination. The response level of DPS Disaster Districts, Emergency Management Council agencies and organizations are expanded, possibly to full activation depending upon the incident or event. Appropriate officials and agency representatives are briefed on the current situation and anticipated impacts.

Typical Events: Major tornado impact, widespread flash flooding, major fire conditions, major medical emergencies and hurricane warnings.

Typical Notification: TDEM staff, mayor/ city manager/county judge, emergency management coordinators, fire departments/EMS, law enforcement, DPS Disaster Districts, Emergency Management Council agency representatives, public works and public information office.

Level I

Emergency Conditions

The scope of the incident has expanded beyond the response capability of local agencies. The SOC is staffed with representatives from the Emergency Management Council agencies and organizations and remains operational for the duration of the incident. DPS Disaster Districts are at increased readiness levels. The SOC fulfills requests for assistance from local governments and may seek intrastate mutual aid and/or federal aid as needed.

Typical Events: Large scale evacuation and sheltering for specific parts of the impact area due to a major incident or hurricane response, community wide threats such as a large hazardous materials spill and wide scale flooding.

Typical Notification: Mayor/city manager/ county judge, emergency management coordinator, fire departments/EMS, law enforcement, Emergency Management Council agency representatives, DPS Disaster Districts, public works and public information office.

SOC Activation and the Texas Emergency Management Council

The Texas Emergency Management Council, which is composed of state agencies, the American Red Cross and The Salvation Army, is established by state law to advise and assist the Governor in all matters relating to disaster mitigation, emergency preparedness, disaster response and recovery.

The council is a group of agencies that have legal responsibility, expertise or resources needed for a specific emergency response function.

As this issue of the Texas Emergency Management Online (TEMO) was being finalized, the SOC was in Level III activation due to flash flooding and widespread river flooding across the state. Governor Abbott had declared a [state of disaster](#) in 31 Texas counties, and the rain continued to fall.

In the next issue of TEMO we will outline the activation process of the SOC and what happens during activation.

It Doesn't Take a Hurricane

Images of Hurricane Ike are still vivid in the minds of many Texans. It is the last hurricane to strike Texas and perhaps the storm of our generation. It easily is the costliest hurricane to strike our state, and its effects were severe and have been long lasting. Coming ashore with a 22-foot peak storm surge, it laid waste to the Bolivar Peninsula and left a wide path of destruction on Galveston Island and all along the northern Texas Gulf Coast, extending north through all of east Texas.



Weakening from a Category 4 hurricane to a strong Category 2 storm, Ike was the costliest American storm up to its time, and recovery projects are still on-going in Texas. Millions were without power, water and fuel for extended periods of time. Property damage in Texas was estimated to be as high as \$29 billion, and the economic impact from the storm lingered long after the storm moved on to the northern states and into Canada.

But it doesn't take a hurricane to cause widespread damage and flooding or change the record books.

Tropical Storm Claudette

In 1979, Tropical Storm Claudette produced torrential rain across southeast Texas. Hundreds of businesses and an estimated 15,000 homes were flooded and the important rice crops were destroyed. Many areas along the coastal plains reported rainfall totals over 30 inches on July 25, 1979. But the epic rain fell in Alvin. As Claudette moved north it stalled over Alvin and dropped 42 inches of rain, which is still the record for the most rainfall in the United States in a 24-hour period. Overall, Claudette was responsible for over \$1 billion in damage when adjusted for today's inflation.

Tropical Storm Charley



flooding.

The most destructive aspect of a tropical storm is the storm surge. But the deadliest part is flooding. When a tropical storm stalls out somewhere, massive levels of flooding can occur. And that's what happened to the normally dry desert town of Del Rio in August 1998.

When Charley stalled over Del Rio, it dropped over 15 inches of rain in an area where that amount of rain has nowhere to settle. The rushing water destroyed 120 homes and damaged more than a thousand buildings. Six people died and 40 were injured in the flash

Tropical Storm Allison



Still considered the "Great Flood," Tropical Storm Allison stalled over Harris County in 2001, causing an estimated \$9 billion in damage. The Houston area usually receives around 50 inches of rain in a year, but Allison dropped as much as 35 inches of rain in a five-day period in the Houston metro area, destroying or heavily damaging over 14,000 homes. An additional 34,000 homes received at least some minor damage. Allison also claimed 23 lives in Texas.

Tropical Storm Allison is the costliest U.S. tropical cyclone that never became a hurricane. It is also the only tropical storm to have its name retired.

Since the Memorial Day weekend of last year, much of Texas has seen abnormally large amounts of rain, and many of our rivers, lakes and reservoirs are full. With the saturated ground, even what would be considered normal rain events have caused widespread flooding on numerous occasions.

Take the time today to make an emergency plan and build your emergency kit. If a tropical storm of even minor intensity came ashore any time soon, the results could be devastating.

[Hurricane Preparedness](#)

[Hurricane Awareness](#)

[Emergency Supply Kits](#)

June News Briefs

Harris County Releases Emergency Preparedness App



(Harris County, TX) – Today, the Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management released a free mobile app, ReadyHarris, just in time for hurricane season. The app helps Harris County residents build a personal preparedness plan and get real-time updates during emergencies.

“Every minute counts when severe weather, or any emergency, threatens our community,” said Harris County Judge Ed Emmett. “This app empowers residents to make a personal plan and receive life-saving information at their fingertips.”

The ReadyHarris app delivers real time weather alerts, hosts a step-by-step guide to building a personalized family disaster plan, offers survival tip sheets, maps evacuation routes and locates local emergency services. The app is available in both English and Spanish.

The release comes at a time when recent surveys find that people depend on their smartphones more than ever for breaking news, important government information and what is happening in their community.

“People depend on information to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters,” added Emmett. “We want to make sure our community has the best available emergency information at all times, as easily

as possible.”

A “Need to Know” section offers quick tips on:

- Flooding
- Tornadoes
- Wildfires
- Winter Storms
- Thunderstorms
- Functional Needs
- Pet Preparedness
- Hurricanes

The free app is available for download on iTunes and Google Play as ReadyHarris. For more information on how to prepare for severe weather and other disasters download the app or visit www.readyharris.org.

Using Social Media for Effective Engagement

Local governments are now well aware that social networking is an important communications and information gathering method for everyday citizens, particularly with the proliferation of smartphones. From students to parents to professionals to elected officials, people from every walk of life are posting their statuses, snapchatting photos, checking their newsfeeds, or sharing news to their social networks via social media.

Here are some guidelines for developing social media sites that promote transparency, enhance engagement and foster collaboration:

1. Present content in a way that is sure to resonate with the audience and avoid repetition
2. Foster a place where opinions and perspectives can be shared freely by engaging and responding to comments positively
3. Determine the tone and perspective of your organization's online persona and stick to it
4. Consider stakeholders and publish content to include information relevant to local businesses, schools and other community organizations
5. Update your social media profiles on a daily basis.

Here's other ways they do it so successfully:

Understand your audience

Evaluate how you have previously attempted to communicate with your community and what was learned from the result, and which social media channels are most popular with them.

Define goals and outcomes

Know what you want to accomplish with social media and why these things are important to accomplish. As you define your goals and outcomes, consider objectives that fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Engagement – Communicating with the public in a meaningful way
- Open innovation – Social media provides a great platform for opening up innovation beyond the walls of the organization
- Participation – Make it easier for the public to take part and share their thoughts and ideas
- Collaboration – Partner with others, sharing information to maximize involvement
- Crowdsourcing – Get the opinions and ideas of those whom your decisions will impact
- Knowledge Sharing – Maximize limited resources across the organization by sharing experiences and information gained with multiple departments

Information from the [International City/County Management Association](#)
National Association of Counties [Toolkit](#)

Healthy and Safe Swimming

Each year the week before Memorial Day, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) sponsors National Healthy and Safe Swimming Week. Healthy and Safe Swimming Week 2016 took place May 23-29, 2016, marking the 12th anniversary of this observance.

Healthy and Safe Swimming Week focuses on simple steps swimmers and pool operators can take to help ensure a healthy and safe swimming experience for everyone. It focuses on the role of swimmers, aquatics and beach staff, residential pool owners and public health officials in preventing drowning, pool chemical injuries and outbreaks of illnesses. It highlights swimmer hygiene and the need for swimmers to take an active role in helping to protect themselves and prevent the spread of germs. These messages are reinforced by [health promotion materials](#) to educate the public on how to prevent recreational water illnesses (RWIs).

What are RWIs?

RWIs are caused by germs spread by swallowing, breathing in mists or aerosols of, or having contact with contaminated water in swimming pools, hot tubs, water parks, water

play areas, interactive fountains, lakes, rivers or oceans. RWIs can also be caused by chemicals in the water or chemicals that evaporate from the water and cause indoor air quality problems. Children, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems are most at risk for RWIs. More information about RWIs can be found on the [Basics of RWIs](#) page.

Information for the public

[CDC Features – Healthy and Safe Swimming Week](#)

[CDC Features – Q&A with Missy Franklin: Olympic Gold Medalist and Healthy Swimming Champion](#)

[Healthy Swimming Information for the Public](#)

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