



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 – July 2016

We didn't have to wait long for summer heat this year. In fact, we didn't even have to wait for summer! As El Niño dissipated and flood waters receded, June temperatures rose. Although summer didn't officially begin until June 21, much of Texas was experiencing temperatures more typical of July and August well before Father's Day.



As temperatures rise, it is very important to be prepared for the things we tend to do in the extreme heat.

Seniors, infants and children, those taking medications and people with chronic medical conditions are most susceptible to heat stress. People who work outdoors are also at a higher risk. It's always a good idea to monitor how often and how long we're exposed to the heat. Take precautions and limit your risk to the dangerous conditions that can lead to heat stress.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends drinking plenty of water or drinks that replenish sodium and other essential nutrients and minerals. Take plenty of breaks from the heat and avoid alcoholic beverages or drinks high in sugar, carbonation or caffeine.

If you must be outside in the heat, learn to recognize symptoms of heat stress, such as headache, nausea, dizziness and weakness. Learn how you can help someone who is exhibiting signs of heat stress. Schedule your time and activities carefully, wear sunscreen, pace yourself, and wear appropriate clothing. Identify a place where you can cool off and try to have someone with you when out in the heat.

Finally, NEVER leave children, pets, or those unable to effectively exit by themselves in hot vehicles! So far this year, 16 kids nationwide have died needlessly from being left in hot cars, according to [babycenter](#) blog. Even at moderate outside temperatures, car interior temperatures can become dangerously hot, and children overheat much faster than adults.

There are many online resources available to learn more about how to prepare for the hot days ahead. Enjoy your summer and take care of yourself outdoors.

[CDC Extreme Heat and Your Health](#)

[National Weather Service: Heat](#)

[Ready.gov: Extreme Heat](#)

[SafeCar.gov](#)

[Red Cross: Stay Safe During Extreme Heat](#)

Heat Related Illnesses Can Be Deadly



According to the National Weather Service, approximately 270 people have died in the United States over the last three years due to heat-related illnesses. The majority of those cases involved children and seniors. Heat-related illness, such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke, can become deadly when unrecognized or improperly managed by individuals, family members and co-workers.

A person's body temperature can rise to dangerous levels outdoors if one does not drink enough water and rest in the shade. The body normally cools itself by sweating. During severe

hot weather with high humidity levels, sweating may not be enough to cool the body down. Very high body temperatures can cause damage to the brain or other vital organs, and can cause disability and even death.

Heat exhaustion is a milder type of heat-related illness. It usually develops after being exposed to high temperature weather. Pre-existing dehydration from drinking coffee or alcohol, vomiting or diarrhea, and not drinking enough fluids can make the body vulnerable and more susceptible to heat exhaustion.

Symptoms of heat exhaustion include:

- Muscle cramps
- Dizziness
- Mild confusion
- Fast heart rate or breathing
- Headache
- Irritability
- Extreme thirst
- Nausea or vomiting
- Pale skin
- Heavy sweating
- Fainting
- Warm to touch



Heat stroke is the most serious heat-related illness. This occurs when the body's temperature rises quickly, and the body cannot cool down. People will normally experience heat exhaustion first and not recognize or ignore the signs and symptoms, which leads to heat stroke. Heat stroke can cause permanent disability and death.

With heatstroke, all the symptoms of heat exhaustion may be present, plus:

- Hot to touch (body temperature over 103°F)
- Irrational behavior or hallucinations
- Confusion
- Rapid, shallow breathing
- Rapid, weak pulse
- Seizures
- Loss of consciousness
- Dry skin

Sweating may be present in heat stroke. A person who is experiencing heat stroke might have very dry skin from dehydration.

Treating Heat Related Illness:

- Call 911 or go to the emergency room if the heat emergency is causing vomiting, seizures or unconsciousness
- Don't give the person anything to drink if they're vomiting or unconscious
- Move to a cooler area, out of direct sunlight
- Slowly drink water or sports drinks every 15 minutes
- Loosen clothing
- Apply cool, wet towels to neck, armpits and groin
- Fan skin, or have someone fan skin if person is unable
- Never offer a drink containing alcohol or caffeine to someone experiencing a heat emergency
- DO NOT douse them with ice cold water

Who is at Risk?

The most common at risk population are seniors and children. The senior population are often found in homes with no working air conditioning or may not be able to move around well enough to get to cooler locations. Due to pre-existing medical conditions, they are more susceptible to being overcome by the heat and having multiple medical complications.

Children are sometimes, inadvisably, left inside of turned off vehicles with no air conditioning or ventilation. The internal temperature of a vehicle in the summer can reach over 150 degrees if sitting in direct sunlight. Children also will push themselves when outside playing and do not always stay very well hydrated. Illness can lead to dehydration that can persist even if the child appears to be feeling better. With signs of returning energy, parents may assume they are fine and back to "normal." This creates a false sense of security that that the child is okay to exert high amounts of energy outside, which may not be the case.

Others at risk are people with mental illness and people with chronic diseases. However, even young and healthy individuals can succumb to heat if they participate in demanding physical activities during hot weather. Other conditions that can increase your risk for heat-related illness include obesity, fever, dehydration, poor circulation, sunburn, and prescription drug or alcohol use.

How to Prevent Heat-Related Illness

Here's how you can protect yourself from heat-related illnesses:

- Drink plenty of liquids like water or electrolyte-enriched liquids, such as Pedialyte, to replace fluids even if you don't feel thirsty
- Avoid liquids that have alcohol, caffeine or a lot of sugar, because they will speed up fluid loss
- Go to air-conditioned areas such as malls, libraries, movie theatres and community centers; even a few hours can cool your body's temperature
- Limit physical activity to morning and evening hours
- If you feel very hot, cool off by taking a cool bath or shower; just opening a window or using a fan may not prevent heat-related illnesses

- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting and moisture-wicking clothing, so sweat can evaporate
- Wear a wide-brimmed, vented hat or use an umbrella; the head absorbs heat easily
- Wear sunglasses and apply sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher according to the manufacturer's directions
- Rest often in shady areas
- NEVER leave anyone in closed, parked cars during hot weather; infants especially do not tolerate heat well, because their sweat glands are not fully developed.

Summary

The most important aspect of dealing with heat-related illness is recognizing the early signs and symptoms. Those symptoms can vary from person to person. When you plan on being out in the heat for prolonged periods of time, you should be prepared to face the elements and be well hydrated. Hydrate today for tomorrow's work is a good reminder when you're preparing to be out in the heat. Also, remember to take time to help seniors and children who can't always protect themselves from the elements and conditions.

Bastrop County Long Term Recovery Team



The Bastrop County Long Term Recovery Team (BCLTRT) was born out of the ashes of the 2011 Bastrop County Complex Fire. The most destructive wildfire in Texas history, the Bastrop County Complex Fire destroyed 1,691 homes. In the four years since the fire, BCLTRT volunteers have cleaned up debris on over 1,400 properties and rebuilt 133 homes for low income, uninsured and underinsured individuals and families. Along with receiving an

award of distinction from the Bastrop Chamber of Commerce, BCLTRT was also recognized in 2014 for its exemplary efforts by receiving the first ever Texas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster Long-Term Recovery of the Year Award.

Just as BCLTRT was preparing to deactivate, Bastrop County was again hit by disaster during the 2015 Memorial Day floods and tornadoes. BCLTRT jumped into action providing emergency shelter, food and clothing to hundreds of displaced residents. BCLTRT also coordinated the cleanup of 178 homes and helped repair 72 homes.



Before these repairs were complete, the Hidden Pines Fire broke out, destroying 64 Bastrop County homes. BCLTRT responded, providing assistance with immediate needs and cleanup, while also rebuilding 10 homes for low income, uninsured and underinsured individuals and families. By April 30, 2016, BCLTRT had completed repairs and rebuilding for all families and individuals requiring assistance from all three disasters.

However, more flooding occurred on April 19, 2016 and again in May during Memorial Day weekend, leaving no rest for the weary. BCLTRT rose to the challenge, providing emergency shelter along with food and clothing for those displaced by the flooding. To date, BCLTRT has cleaned out approximately 62 homes and is currently in the process of case managing those needing help with repairs.

Four disasters in one year posed a significant challenge for BCLTRT. Such devastation during, in such a short period, exhausts both human and financial resources.

Over the past year, there have been only a very lucky few in the county not directly affected by wildfire or flood. This has made asking for volunteer help or financial assistance difficult. Somehow, we have managed to come together for our neighbors. We've also had a great response from voluntary organizations and donors from outside of our community in past.



With all of our volunteers and donors, BCLTRT has had to look at things differently to meet the requirements of giving as well as how we approached asking for help. The implications for our local volunteers and providers were much different compared to those for people and organizations from outside of Bastrop County who offered assistance.



At this point, we can say our recovery efforts have worked out better than expected. BCLTRT is proud to not only continue to provide case management, emotional and spiritual support to Bastrop County disaster survivors, but also to have assisted with the development and operation of other long-term recovery organizations all over the state of Texas and in several other states across the United States.

For more information about Bastrop County recovery efforts [click here](#).

What Happens in the State Operations Center, Part 2 Increasing the Readiness Level of the State Operations Center

This is part two 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.



Increasing the readiness level of the State Operations Center (SOC) refers to a scalable system that generally correlates with the level of support needed by local governments, the number of agencies and organizations that are required to provide said support, and the size of an event. As identified in part one of this article series, there are four readiness levels used by the SOC:

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| Level IV | Normal Conditions |
| Level III | Increased Readiness |
| Level II | Escalated Response Conditions |
| Level I | Emergency Conditions |

As the readiness levels indicate, the SOC usually operates at Readiness Level IV - Normal Conditions. Daily Operations staff conduct situational monitoring, perform daily responsibilities and keep management and TDEM staff updated on any situation that could cause a readiness level escalation. Any requests from local governments are processed through the appropriate Disaster District Coordinator (DC) to the SOC and, if approved, Daily Operations staff distribute the request to the most appropriate state agency or organization for fulfillment.

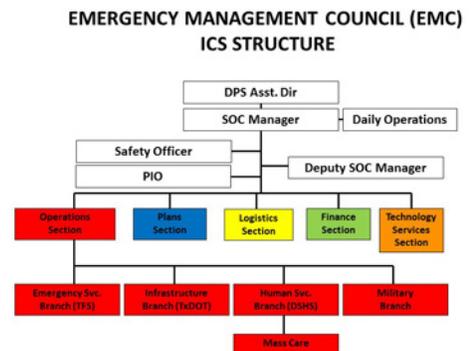
When a situation or incident escalates to a point where local governments or state agencies require more assistance to respond than can be easily managed by Daily Operations, a decision is made to increase the readiness level. At times, the decision is based upon knowledge of an impending event, such as an extreme weather forecast, that will most likely require local governments to request state assistance. In both of these situations, the readiness level may take a gradual increase from Readiness Level IV to III, a level at which only selected state agencies or organizations will respond. However, the occurrence of a catastrophic emergency, such as a tornado affecting a large population or a large hazardous materials spill, may cause the readiness level to immediately escalate to Readiness Level II or I. This could include activation of the full [Emergency Management Council](#) (EMC).



The EMC operates under an executive order by the Governor and provides assistance in identifying, mobilizing and deploying state resources to respond to major emergencies and disasters. It is composed of 32 state agencies and 2 voluntary organizations. Their specific duties and responsibilities are outlined in the [State Emergency Management Plan and Annexes](#). Several other organizations and private sector partners, such as public utility companies, fuel providers, higher education partners, contractors, volunteers, and local government representatives, also provide assistance during a response

The type and extent of the emergency response or disaster, drives the selection of EMC agencies for activation and response. Agencies are unique to each response and a full activation of the EMC rarely occurs, with the exception of major events like a hurricane.

The EMC is organized under a modified Incident Management System (ICS) structure with five sections: Operations, Plans, Logistics, Finance, and Technology. Members of the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) State Management Team and Critical Information Services staff direct each section. These individuals are employees of TDEM and have considerable experience and expertise in ICS and technology. The majority of the state agencies and organizations are grouped into branches under the Operations Section.



To date in 2016, the SOC increased its readiness level 7 times for a total of 33 days. This included 6 times for a total of 29 days at Readiness Level III, 3 days at Readiness Level II for widespread severe weather and flooding, and 1 day at Readiness Level III for the Papal Visit to Juárez, Mexico.

The SOC and TDEM rely heavily upon our state agencies and partner organizations to enable us to assist local governments. These agencies and their employees provide excellent service to the citizens of Texas during emergency events.

Technology is very important to our ability to respond effectively and efficiently. Part III will include more detail related to our technology capabilities including satellite communications, real-time media, emergency management software (WebEOC) and global information system applications.

[What Happens in the State Operations Center, Part 1](#)
[History of the State Operations Center, Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)

News Briefs - July 2016

Warning to parents: AAA's '100 deadliest days' for teen drivers have begun

For teenagers, the summer months mean fun with friends and freedom from school. But they also come with some serious safety concerns.

AAA is warning teen drivers about the "100 deadliest days." That's the period starting on Memorial Day when teen deaths from car wrecks have historically spiked.

The AAA study says nearly 60 percent of all teen crashes involved a distracted driver. Texting is a big problem, but it's not the biggest. Teens are more likely to be distracted by a passenger than anything else.

Cellphones were found to be a factor in just 12 percent of teen crashes, though researchers say the number of teenagers who text and use social media while driving is on the rise.

[From Dayton Daily News](#)

Federal flood officials in Texas use Twitter to alert

Rick Jervis, USA TODAY

7:15 PM. CDT June 01, 2016

Faced with relentless floods, Texas-based federal officials are turning to a new ally in the war on rising water: Twitter.

The U.S. Geological Survey, the federal agency responsible for monitoring river levels, recently launched a pair of Twitter feeds -- @USGS_TexasFlood and @USGS_TexasRain -- that give out automated, real-time river levels and rainfall amounts during heavy rains.

The feeds help first-responders and flood forecasters see river gauges in real time and help with decisions ranging from when to evacuate to weekend forecasts.

During last year's Memorial Day deadly floods, officials found themselves without power and turning to Twitter as a way to communicate and share data.

[From USA Today](#)

Facebook tests having users initiate Safety Check

Facebook is experimenting with letting users, not Facebook, initiate Safety Check during a natural disaster or terrorist attack.

In coming weeks, the giant social network will test a version in which users can notify loved ones that they are safe and send an invitation to friends in the area to do the same rather than relying on a team of engineers to pour over real-time data on international crises to pinpoint the ones that merit a Safety Check activation.



Safety Check lets people with one click let family and friends know they are out of harm's way. Facebook pings users in the affected area asking them to update their status on Facebook. Friends can also mark other friends in their network as safe.

If you have friends in the area of a natural disaster and the tool has been activated, you will receive a notification about those friends that have marked themselves as safe. Clicking on this notification will take you to the Safety Check bookmark that will show you a list of their updates.

[From USA Today](#)

It's flooding and you're behind the wheel. What do you do?

Each year, more deaths occur due to flooding than from any other thunderstorm-related hazard, according to the National Weather Service.

It's important not to underestimate the force of powerful, rising water, especially in Florida, which is prone to flooding.

The NWS says many drowning deaths occur during bad floods when vehicles are swept downstream.

Drivers should never ignore the warning barriers during floods.

National Weather Service data shows:

- Nearly half of all flash flood fatalities are vehicle-related,
- The majority of victims are males, and
- Flood deaths affect all age groups.

[From Dayton Daily News](#)

Child deaths in cars likely to rise with summer temperatures

A hot car, a distracted parent, a dead child. It happens every summer, but the stories are no less tragic.

Experts and public safety officials urge parents and caregivers to use caution this time of year and never leave a kid behind in a car, because the consequences can be deadly.

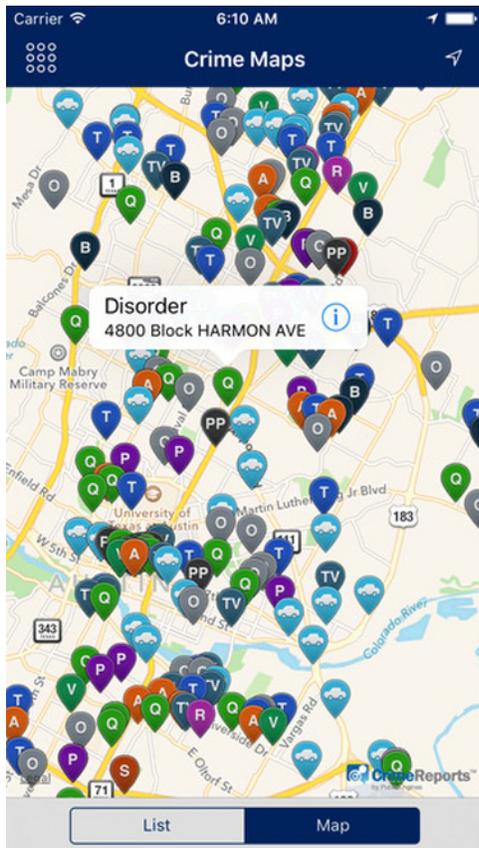
Experts on child car deaths say the only way to really reduce the sad toll is to dispel the belief by many parents that such a thing can't happen to them. All it takes is one change in your routine for it to happen.

During the sweltering North Texas summer, when outdoor temperatures can easily top reach triple digits, there's not a lot of room for error -- or absentmindedness.

After a few hours, air in the car can reach temperatures 45 to 50 degrees higher than the air outside. The popular solution of opening windows doesn't help much. In tests, a 1 1/2 inch crack in each window made the car just 2 degrees cooler.

[From Dallas Morning News](#)

Austin PD Comes Out on Top in App Showdown



AUSTIN, TEXAS — Government IT leaders from state and local agencies throughout Texas gathered in Austin for the Texas Digital Government Summit, an annual conference presented by e.Republic, the parent company of Government Technology magazine and govtech.com.

Users of the Austin Police Department's app can sign up for alerts, use an interactive crime map or view a department directory for direct connections to specific people like detectives, investigators or the domestic violence unit. Citizens can file police reports, praise officers and link to social media for the latest news from the department (including full press conferences available on YouTube).

Event participants weighed in at the conclusion of the presentations by casting their votes for their favorite app. While each app snagged some votes, Austin PD took top honors.

[From Government Technology](#)

Texas land office launches online hurricane information site

The Texas General Land Office launched a new Hurricane Preparedness & Planning informational

outreach initiative on its website, txglo.org.

The GLO Hurricane Preparedness and Planning initiative is a focused effort to pool local, state and federal resources and begin prioritizing efforts to build a resilient Texas coast. In the world of hurricane preparedness and recovery, information is power.

The goal is to develop a Comprehensive Plan for Texas coastal zone for Flood Risk Management, Coastal Storm Risk Management and Ecosystem Restoration, with specific feasibility-level focus to recommend projects for individual Congressional authorizations.

The Coastal Texas Study encompasses 18 coastal counties along 400 miles of the Gulf Coast. The area contains more six million people. Hurricane Ike was responsible for nearly 200 deaths and \$38 billion in damages in 2008.

[From the Liberty County Vindicator](#)

July 2016: Credits

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