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EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

OVERVIEW

The importance of safe and reliable transportation solutions is heightened during emergency or disaster situations. In an emergency or disaster, providing safe transportation options is a primary function of the state, making evacuation, search and rescue, mass care and other critical response activities possible. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) maintains readiness for all-hazards response, with heavy concentration on the state's imminent large-scale threats. Among other duties, TxDOT assists the public with getting out of harm's way and getting home safely. In addition, TxDOT performs repairs and debris removal to help stabilize emergency and disaster situations.



Interagency coordination of efforts is a key to successful emergency management. Before, during and after an emergency or disaster, TxDOT collaborates with local officials, government agencies, law enforcement, contractors and relief organizations to minimize impacts and to restore and maintain safety for the traveling public. TxDOT, as a member of the State Emergency Management Council, provides representation to the State Operations Center as required, plus regional representatives to the Disaster District Council emergency operations centers located in counties and cities directly affected by the emergency or disaster.

In accordance with the National Incident Management System, the state capitalizes on TxDOT's strengths. TxDOT, with its skilled workforce, specialized equipment, material resources, engineering capabilities and presence in every county of the state has taken on special duties:

- TxDOT is the primary agency for the Public Works and Engineering and Transportation functions of the State Emergency Management Plan (part of the Texas Homeland Security Strategic Plan).
- During emergency activations, the TxDOT emergency management coordinator supports the Infrastructure Branch of the State Operations Center.



- As a member of the Texas Homeland Security Council, TxDOT provides input and analysis to the Texas Homeland Security Strategic Plan and response efforts.
- TxDOT is a member of the State Hazard Mitigation Team, providing input to the State Hazard Mitigation Plan and grant-funding processes.
- TxDOT has a support role in each of the following functional annexes of the State Emergency Management Plan (to prepare for, respond to and help the state recover from an emergency or disaster):
 - Communications.
 - Direction and Control.
 - Evacuation.
 - Firefighting.
 - Hazard Mitigation.
 - Hazardous Materials and Oil Spill Response.
 - Public Information.
 - Public Works and Engineering (as Primary Agency).
 - Recovery.
 - Transportation (as Primary Agency).
- TxDOT has a support role in each of the following hazard-specific annexes of the State Emergency Management Plan:
 - Cyber Threat.
 - Disaster Area Re-entry.
 - Drought.
 - Hurricane.
 - Terrorism.
 - Wildland Fire.

STATE OF TEXAS ASSISTANCE REQUEST (STAR)

Local jurisdictions are required to utilize their own resources in responding to emergencies. Jurisdictions may request additional assistance from the state when their resources have been depleted or a gap has been identified. If the requested resources cannot be provided by the local Disaster District Chairman, then an assistance request is made using the State of Texas Assistance Request process.

The request is sent to the State Operations Center where state agencies, including TxDOT, work together to fulfill the request. TxDOT assistance to local jurisdictions has included traffic control materials, wildfire support, debris removal, bridge inspection and transportation of resources.



HURRICANES

During a hurricane event, TxDOT may be asked to safely expedite traffic flow out of the threatened area, pending the local mayor or county judge's decision to evacuate. TxDOT does not have the authority to mandate an evacuation, only a local mayor or county judge's has the authority call for an evacuation. TxDOT, in coordination with law enforcement agencies, provides signage, equipment and traffic control personnel. TxDOT also pre-stages equipment in or near the affected areas to expedite cleanup upon re-entry into the affected areas.

Safety is TxDOT's first priority. Following a hurricane, TxDOT reminds its employees and the public to be aware of hazardous conditions. They are warned that they may confront dangers including high water, dangerous wildlife, downed power lines and other hazardous debris. Crews are scheduled to provide a 24/7 support response, as conditions warrant, with a 12-hour shift rotation.

In anticipation of an evacuation, TxDOT assesses and activates methods that best and most safely fit the circumstances.

Highway Preparation

Examples of preparation include minimizing road closures, removing obstacles such as abandoned vehicles, suspending construction and road maintenance, arranging for additional traffic control through construction areas and sweeping shoulders.



Comfort Stations

To help accommodate the expected heavy influx of evacuees, TxDOT works with local officials and other organizations to provide comfort stations along evacuation routes, which may include TxDOT Travel Information Centers. These facilities offer additional temporary restroom facilities, water and ice. They also may offer other services such as oxygen exchange and snacks.

Evacu-lanes

When needed, TxDOT in coordination with the Texas Department of Public Safety can direct that select highway shoulders along the evacuation routes be used as travel lanes. These shoulders are called evacu-lanes.

Contraflow

Pending a local mayor or county judge's decision to activate contraflows, TxDOT will work with Texas Department of Public Safety to initiate contraflow operations according to existing plans. Contraflow lane reversal roughly doubles the number of lanes available for evacuation traffic.

Fuel

TxDOT's evacuation plans also call for the support of certain fuel stations with backup generators at regular intervals along evacuation routes. As part of a state fuel team, TxDOT works with the gasoline industry to ensure the availability of fuel in times of emergency. During hurricane season, TxDOT's fleet of 30 fuel tanks are strategically staged in the Bryan, Yoakum and Corpus Christi TxDOT districts to provide assistance to responders and stranded motorists.

The tanks carry approximately 800 gallons of unleaded or diesel fuel to dispense fuel into smaller tanks or directly into vehicles. These mobile fuel tanks have redundant power capability and can be operated on six-yard or ten-yard dump trucks equipped with extended 12-volt power or on a trailer deck using a 115-volt generator or with a hand pump.



Debris Removal

After a hurricane, TxDOT's priority is to clear state roads of debris for emergency response operations. TxDOT strike teams which consist of front-end loaders, dump trucks, backhoes, sign trucks and signal trucks, work to clear roads, remove tree limbs and repair traffic signals and highway signs. TxDOT works with the Texas Public Utility Commission and local power companies to address downed power lines in impacted areas. TxDOT has several on-call debris removal contracts and monitoring contracts to reduce down time and facilitate a more efficient re-entry process for the public.



Repairs and Restoration

TxDOT assesses and repairs damage to roads, bridges and other state highway transportation infrastructure. TxDOT crews specifically look for damage to pavement, guardrails, signal lights, bridge supports and driving surfaces. If a bridge or road is unsafe for travel, the facility is closed and the public is notified.

Local law enforcement officers assist in patrolling signalized intersections and clearing roads while sign and signal repairs are being made.



WILDLAND FIRE

TxDOT provides assistance during wildland fires, providing water for fire suppression and fuel for fire department vehicles. TxDOT may also clear vegetation to create firebreaks and direct traffic where necessary to address road closures or smoky conditions.

TxDOT employees are generally not trained firefighters, but they are informed of best practices for safely providing TxDOT support during a wildland fire response. TxDOT has developed a training course with Texas Tech University, which TxDOT disaster response personnel take as part of their training.

TxDOT also maintains two wildland fire response trailers filled with personal protective equipment for employees. TxDOT also has a trailer for command and communications, which can be used to support safety operations. TxDOT fleet mechanics also deploy with the equipment and operators to ensure optimum performance of TxDOT assets.

During wild land fire responses (as well as ice storm responses), TxDOT has successfully used its fleet of 30 mobile fueling tanks to support emergency operations statewide.

SNOW & ICE

TxDOT uses multiple methods for confronting winter weather, striving to minimize accumulation of snow and ice on highways. Preparedness for ice and snow response begins long before the first freeze of the season, and TxDOT employees proactively respond to icy and snowy conditions when the weather arrives.

Applications of materials

TxDOT applies materials for anti-icing to prevent ice formation or deicing material, to remove ice, and may apply traction materials such as sand, crushed stone or crushed

slag to help prevent vehicle sliding. Applications are carefully timed with weather forecast information to maximize effectiveness of the material. When able, TxDOT employs pre-treatment strategies in advance of potential winter storms. The application of anti-icing materials in advance of freezing weather can greatly limit or altogether prevent the bonding of ice to pavement and bridges.

As needed, employees staff 12-hour shifts, supporting round-the-clock operations, even if the need occurs on a weekend or holiday. Before, during and after a storm, TxDOT personnel monitor the situation by making on-site observations, reviewing camera images and checking news reports and feedback from the public.

Snow and Ice Removal

TxDOT employees in strategic locations are equipped to plow snow and blade ice so that motorists can use the road. TxDOT's 30 mobile fueling tanks are deployed as needed to keep up with the needs of fleet fuel and, if necessary, to refuel stranded motorists. TxDOT conducts emergency exercises to test the mobile fueling stations. The exercises help identify ways to improve the equipment's features for safe and reliable performance during a winter weather response. During snow and ice operations, communications about road conditions include safety messages to the traveling public to stay off slick, icy roads or be vigilant of the possibility of snow or ice on bridges and roadways.

TxDOT now follows a four tier system for treating all primary state highways across the state:

1. Tier I roadways affect the movement of interstate commerce and receive priority for pre-treatment and de-icing.
2. Tier II roadways are of high priority locally or regionally and are treated in collaboration with local governments.
3. Tier III roadways are local roads that receive treatment depending on available resources.
4. Tier IV roadways are local roads that receive treatment on problem areas.

TxDOT districts have enough material to pre-treat or de-ice every Tier I roadway under its responsibility.





ALL-HAZARDS PUBLIC INFORMATION

TxDOT keeps the traveling public informed of road closures and changing weather conditions and provides emergency information during emergency and disaster situations through newspapers, television, radio and social media.

Online road condition information is available on the Drive Texas website and interactive map at www.drivetexas.org. Drive Texas underwent changes in mid-2014 to ensure greater reliability and allow more flexible options for employees to update conditions.

The Texas road condition and travel information phone line is staffed by trained operators during emergency and disaster response. Recorded information on road conditions is also available on a 24-hour basis. The number is **1-(800) 452-9292**.

TxDOT's networks of more than 730 dynamic message signs are permanently installed along statewide roadways, including along evacuation routes. During emergencies, TxDOT makes full use of dynamic message signs across the state to convey up-to-date information about fuel and shelter and to warn the public about danger zones. If necessary, portable, changeable message signs may also be deployed to display information.

The safety of Texans is TxDOT's highest priority when responding to emergencies and disasters. TxDOT is ready to respond and provide resources and personnel to prepare, respond and recover from emergency and disaster events. Because of its network of statewide offices, equipment and personnel, TxDOT is well suited for emergency and disaster response.

TxDOT will continue to adapt its disaster response and recovery strategies and work with its partners at all levels of state and local government to better serve Texans.

www.DriveTexas.org




SCAN WITH SMART PHONE

Learn more about TxDOT road conditions visit www.drivetexas.org

Be Safe. Drive Smart.

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



VALUES:

People

People are the Department's most important customer, asset, and resource. The well-being, safety, and quality of life for Texans and the traveling public are of the utmost concern to the Department. We focus on relationship building, customer service, and partnerships.

Accountability

We accept responsibility for our actions and promote open communication and transparency at all times.

Trust

We strive to earn and maintain confidence through reliable and ethical decision-making.

Honesty

We conduct ourselves with the highest degree of integrity, respect, and truthfulness.

VISION:

A forward-thinking leader delivering mobility, enabling economic opportunity, and enhancing quality of life for all Texans.

MISSION:

Through collaboration and leadership, we deliver a safe, reliable, and integrated transportation system that enables the movement of people and goods.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- **Deliver the Right Projects** – Implement effective planning and forecasting processes that deliver the right projects on-time and on-budget.
- **Focus on the Customer** – People are at the center of everything we do.
- **Foster Stewardship** – Ensure efficient use of state resources.
- **Optimize System Performance** – Develop and operate an integrated transportation system that provides reliable and accessible mobility, and enables economic growth.
- **Preserve our Assets** – Deliver preventive maintenance for TxDOT's system and capital assets to protect our investments.
- **Promote Safety** – Champion a culture of safety.
- **Value our Employees** – Respect and care for the well-being and development of our employees.



This document is part of an educational series on transportation issues produced by the Texas Department of Transportation. This document, the full Educational Series and other helpful resources can be found online at www.txdot.gov keyword search "State Legislative Affairs".