



2012 ANNUAL REPORT



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Houston TranStar is home to Harris County's Emergency Operations Center.



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

The Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (HCOHSEM) works year-round to prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies and disasters of every scale. While a highly active 2012 hurricane season spared the Texas coast, the HCOHSEM Emergency Operations Center activated 12 times and monitored hundreds of incidents – most of which were only inconvenient but some of which were potentially catastrophic.

HCOHSEM is a national model of best practices in homeland security and emergency management. In a county of 1,777 square miles, 34 cities, more than 125 law enforcement agencies and 54 fire departments, that success is achieved through tireless collaboration and strong partnerships. Above all else, public and individual preparedness is the backbone of our community's resilience.

In our complex multi-jurisdictional environment, the hub for this work is Houston TranStar - the region's epicenter for emergency management and transportation. Houston TranStar is a cooperative effort including the Texas Department of Transportation, Harris County, the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County and the City of Houston. Last year, we broke ground on an expansion that will improve coordination for both transportation incidents and region-wide emergencies. The expanded facility should be fully operational by the fall of 2014.

The Regional Joint Information Center has become a one-stop-shop for decision makers, stakeholders and residents to get timely emergency public information during times of crisis. Last year, HCOHSEM revamped its website, grew its social media program and embraced technologies that deliver real-time updates to mobile devices.

I am proud of the accomplishments of the past year, and there are more to come in 2013.

Sincerely,



County Judge Ed Emmett, Director
Harris County Office of Homeland Security
& Emergency Management

Houston skyline.
Courtesy of
Houston-Galveston
Area Council.



County Judge Ed Emmett, Director
Harris County Office of Homeland Security
& Emergency Management



MISSION STATEMENT

The Harris County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HCOHSEM) will be a national model of “best practices” in emergency planning, preparation, response and recovery.

HCOHSEM will help prepare, safeguard and protect the residents and property of Harris County from the effects of disasters through effective planning, preparation, response and recovery activities. To accomplish this mission, HCOHSEM will:

- Develop, maintain and coordinate a comprehensive emergency management plan.
- Activate and staff an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to coordinate and support efforts to respond to, and recover from, emergencies and disasters.
- Develop and assist in the delivery of effective public outreach programs.
- Collect, provide and disseminate information for elected officials, the media, our residents, partners and other stakeholders.
- Train, educate, and prepare for emergencies through the development and delivery of effective classes, drills and exercises.

Teen CERT at 2012 Rodeo Round-up.



Industrial warehouse fire in east Harris County, September 2012.



INTRODUCTION

The Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (HCOHSEM) works closely with local jurisdictions, emergency responders, the private and public sector to engage in comprehensive disaster planning for Harris County. HCOHSEM's goal is to mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from the effects of natural or man-made disasters and other hazards.

HCOHSEM maintains and updates more than 285 plans, annexes, appendices and supporting documents that guide preparedness, response and mitigation activities that can be applied to any disaster affecting the region.

Although its proximity to the Gulf of Mexico makes Harris County vulnerable to hurricanes, the area experiences its share of other incidents including floods, winter storms, wildfires, hazardous materials, industrial accidents and high-security special events.

With almost 4.2 million residents, Harris County is the most populous county in Texas and the third most populous in the United States. The county consists of 34 cities, including Houston, the nation's fourth largest city. The county government is the primary provider of basic services to the 1.6 million people that reside in the unincorporated part of Harris County. The population of the unincorporated area of the county alone would make it the nation's fifth-largest city. Harris County is home to 54 fire departments, more than 125 law enforcement agencies, 22 major watersheds and more than 1,200 municipal utility districts.

HCOHSEM serves as a liaison to local, county, state, federal and military agencies and departments. These partners are key players that help support response and recovery efforts during emergencies.

Harris County Emergency Operations Center (EOC).



Downtown Houston. Courtesy of Houston-Galveston Area Council.



HURRICANE SEASON

The Texas Gulf Coast region was unaffected by hurricanes this year, although the 2012 season was very active with 19 named storms, 10 hurricanes and one major hurricane (Category 3 or higher). On average, the Atlantic hurricane season has about 15 named storms, eight hurricanes and four major hurricanes.

HCOHSEM monitored storms all season, keeping a close eye on Tropical Storms Debby and Ernesto, and Hurricane Isaac, which could have moved into the Texas coast.

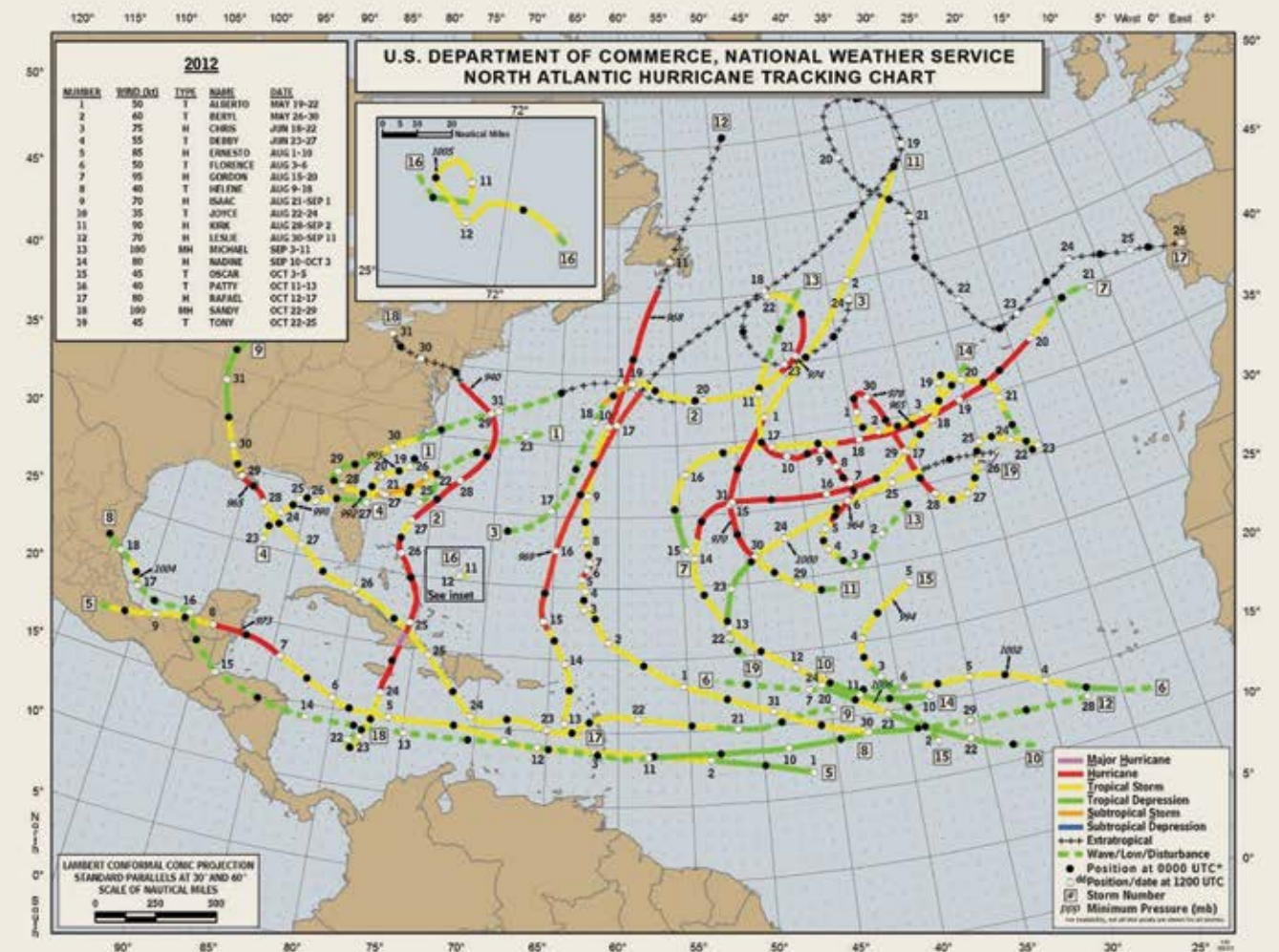
Every year, HCOHSEM monitors all storms, from the time they form until the area is in the clear, because any storm that moves into the Gulf poses a potential threat to the region.

The 2012 Atlantic hurricane season got an early start with the formation of two tropical storms well in advance of June 1st, the official start of the season. Tropical Storm Alberto formed on May 19th off the coast of South Carolina, and Tropical Storm Beryl - the strongest off-season storm to make U.S. landfall - developed on May 26th.

HCOHSEM promotes disaster preparedness year-round because hurricanes are only one of many threats that can affect this area, and disaster can strike at any time.



Tropical Storm Alberto, May 2012.
Courtesy of NASA/Goddard MODIS Rapid Response Team.



2012 Hurricane Tracking Chart
Courtesy: NOAA/National Hurricane Center

HCOHSEM provides vision, direction and expertise in the field of homeland security to heighten the county's state of readiness. It also develops, reviews and coordinates emergency management programs to meet the county's homeland security goals and needs.

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND KEY RESOURCES (CIKR)

Harris County's critical infrastructure is diverse and spans into numerous sectors that include energy, chemical facilities, communications, drinking water, electric power and transportation systems. These sectors are not only critical during times of crisis, but are also everyday essentials for the national economy.

Since most of the critical infrastructure and key resources are privately owned and operated, public-private partnerships are necessary to protect infrastructure and to prepare for, respond to and recover quickly and effectively from various events.

In 2012, HCOHSEM partnered with the Harris County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) to develop a Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources plan for Harris County. The plan provides a framework for identifying these partnerships that integrates a range of efforts designed to enhance the safety of critical infrastructure and key resources. The partnerships promote coordination, cooperation and communication.

Harris County and the surrounding region are represented by HCOHSEM's Emergency Management Coordinator, Mark Sloan, on the State, Local, Tribal and Territorial Government Coordinating Council (SLTTGCC). The SLTTGCC supports geographically diverse partnerships to ensure state, local, tribal and territorial officials play an integral role in national critical infrastructure protection and resilience efforts.

INTELLIGENCE AND ANALYSIS

HCOHSEM communicates and coordinates with numerous local, state and federal agencies when dealing with sensitive intelligence information. This type of information exchange is critical to planning efforts. Information can be provided in numerous formats including classified, for official use only and open source. Our partnerships with the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) and the Houston Region Intelligence Service Center (HRISC) provide effective coordination for creating plans for both special and spontaneous events. Analysts from the Harris County Sheriff's Office support both the JTTF and the HRISC.

United States Coast
Guard (USCG) Helicopter.
Courtesy of USCG.



Port of Houston. Courtesy of USCG.



FIRST RESPONSE PARTNERS AT TRANSTAR

HARRIS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE (HCSO)

HCSO has seven officers assigned to HCOHSEM. Some of their duties include:

- Working directly with Incident Command during activations.
- Staffing and providing security for Houston TranStar during dignitary visits and Emergency Operations Center activations.
- Participating in all drills/exercises in which the HCSO or Harris County, in general, is a stakeholder.
- Coordinating planning and response activities with state and federal military forces.
- Transporting assessment teams and/or conducting damage assessments post events.
- Maintaining and updating all plans that would involve a Homeland Security Bureau response, such as deployment of the Strategic National Stockpile.
- Reviewing and updating, as needed, all annexes that are assigned to the Sheriff's Office in the Harris County Emergency Management Plan.
- Conducting public awareness activities/education for residents and business groups.

HCSO has the lead role in man-made crisis management, and will coordinate efforts with state and federal law enforcement agencies when needed.

HCOHSEM will have the lead role in consequence management, taking measures to restore essential government services and provide relief to those affected by man-made acts.

HOUSTON SHIP CHANNEL SECURITY DISTRICT (HSCSD)

HCOHSEM also works to secure grant funding for HSCSD. The HSCSD is a true model for how multi-jurisdictional agencies work together to deter man-made security issues. HSCSD was created to provide a greater degree of security and safety for facilities, employees and communities surrounding the Houston Ship Channel.

Modern technology allows partners to watch the Ship Channel through a combination of wireless and fiber-optic communications, surveillance and detection cameras. Law enforcement is also visible through security personnel on marked patrol boats, patrol cars and all-terrain vehicles.

HARRIS COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE (HCFMO)

HCOHSEM continues to work closely with HCFMO to monitor and support operations at fires, hazardous materials and other large scale incidents within the county and surrounding areas.

HCFMO houses two staff members at HCOHSEM offices as regional planners who primarily focus on Regional Technical Rescue capabilities and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives / Hazardous Materials preparedness and response, as well as critical infrastructure protection strategies. Work is under way to catalog and analyze critical infrastructure and key resource data.

Other HCOHSEM law enforcement partners include the FBI, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Federal Communications Commission and the Texas Department of Public Safety.



Digital billboard launch test with Clear Channel Outdoor in the EOC.



INDUSTRY

HCOHSEM provides an industrial liaison that responds to all industrial incidents that have the potential of affecting the community and supports the Harris County Hazardous Materials Response Team (HCHMRT). The liaison is charged with providing emergency communications for elected officials and other stakeholders, serving as a liaison with partner agencies as well as providing on-scene safety officer support.

HCOHSEM is active in nine Industry Community Advisory Councils and Panels and eight Local Emergency Planning Committees. It is also involved with many fire and EMS associations and workgroups.

The following are a few 2012 incidents that HCOHSEM monitored and supported in coordination with HCFMO:

- On-scene communications support to HCHMRT and the Crosby Volunteer Fire Department after a train struck a tractor-trailer that stalled on a rail line.
- Coordinated information from the scene of a massive chemical warehouse fire along the Houston Ship Channel.
- Assisted HCHMRT and Sheldon Fire & Rescue with a helicopter crash that resulted in two fatalities.
- Coordinated air monitoring activities with Harris County Pollution Control (HCPC) following an industrial flaring event in the Deer Park area.
- Coordinated emergency communications between HCPC, HCSO and industry during a refinery fire in Baytown.
- Assisted HCHMRT on site of a tanker truck explosion in northeast Harris County.

HCOHSEM coordinates and collaborates with emergency partners to reduce the impact of emergencies and disasters.

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER (EOC)

HCOHSEM activates its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for a wide range of emergencies or special events. The EOC is where emergency partners coordinate response efforts, make decisions, locate and deploy resources, and gather and disseminate information. In 2012, HCOHSEM activated its EOC 12 times.

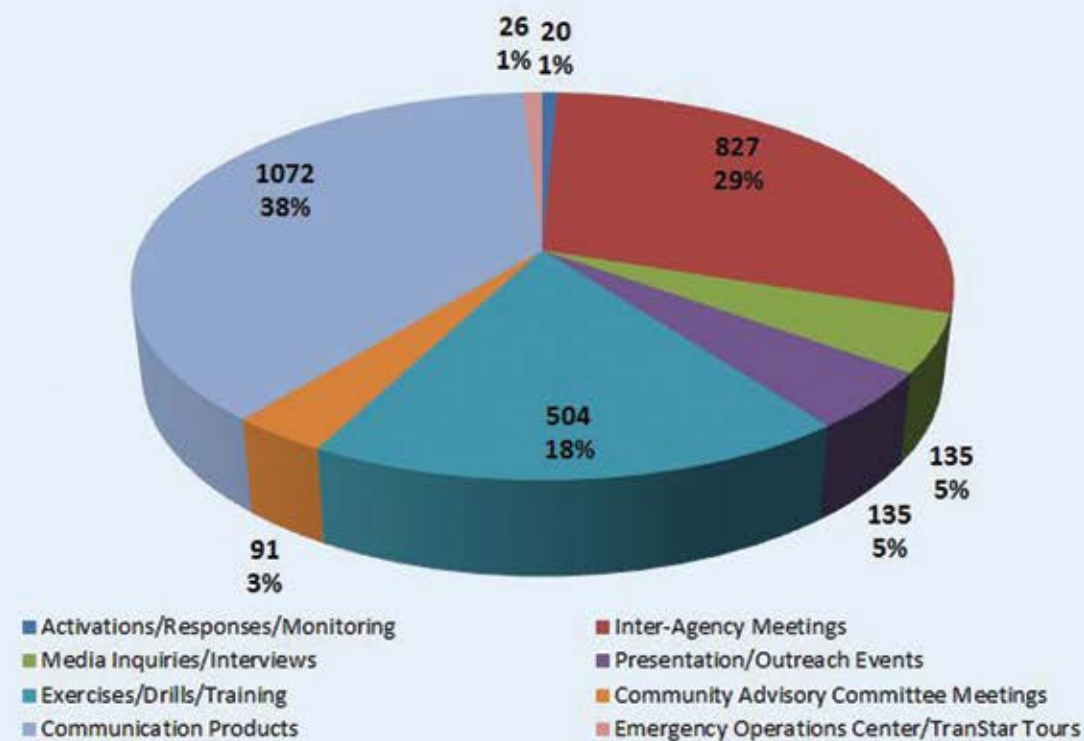
The EOC is equipped with state-of-the-art technology to assist in information gathering, assessment and public notification. It is also connected to the State's WebEOC network that enables emergency personnel to electronically share real-time information during an incident and helps manage resources.

Construction is under way at Houston TranStar to expand HCOHSEM facilities to include a new and larger EOC. The construction began last summer and will continue through 2013.

ON-CALL

HCOHSEM operates a 24-hour On-Call program, providing response partners with access to a trained staff member for the reporting of significant events and after-hour resource requests. Calls range from severe weather information to assistance requests for hazardous materials incidents. In 2012, On-Call received 2,277 documented notifications requiring more than 866 hours of staff time.

HCOHSEM Activity Distribution by Type for 2012



HCOHSEM manages, develops and updates emergency plans and annexes based on an all-hazards approach. The plans follow local, state and federal requirements.

In 2012, HCOHSEM worked on a Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources plan, a Long Term Power Outage plan, a Mass Fatality plan and a Public Information plan. It also updated its All-Hazard Mitigation plan and several Annexes.

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND KEY RESOURCES (CIKR) PLAN

This plan describes how Harris County will identify CIKR, and how its profiles will be developed and stored. The information will then be used to support collaborative planning efforts and provide necessary information to support personnel during response efforts.

CIKR includes the assets, systems, networks and functions that provide vital services to the county, city, state, region and sometimes the nation. Preserving these assets from potential disaster is a critical component of homeland security, because threats on CIKR could significantly disrupt those activities, produce cascading effects and result in large-scale human suffering, property destruction, economic loss and damage to public confidence.

MASS FATALITY INCIDENT (MFI) PLAN

HCOHSEM's planning section worked with local governments, public and private organizations and volunteers to develop an MFI plan for the 13-county Houston-Galveston Area Council (HGAC) region, as well as a specific MFI plan that addresses Harris County. The Harris County plan was drafted by the Harris County Institute of Forensic Science and is housed in its office.

The plan contains the necessary concepts and mechanisms to help jurisdictions adequately prepare for, respond to and recover from an emergency that results in mass fatalities.

ALL-HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

HCOHSEM updated the County's All-Hazard Mitigation Plan and submitted updates to the state. Multiple jurisdictions submitted new action items into the plan in order to improve their opportunities for grant funding of mitigation projects. The planning section will start the next five year revision process in 2013.

TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE REGISTRY (TAR)

Each year, HCOHSEM participates in community-wide planning initiatives for residents with functional and access needs. In 2012, several projects were implemented to help prepare all the residents of Harris County, regardless of their individual needs.

Residents who are unable to respond to a mandatory evacuation order are encouraged to dial 2-1-1 every year and provide their contact information and any needs that may require special transportation.

GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SYSTEM (GIS)

HCOHSEM's GIS analyst collects vast amounts of data that can be rapidly transformed into actionable information to reduce response times, expand situational awareness and improve communication.

GIS supports the EOC response mission by maintaining incident status and damage assessment, evacuating affected populations and providing shelter support, tracking and acquiring resources from multiple locations and preparing maps and status reports for community leaders and decision makers.

In 2012, HCOHSEM GIS produced mapping products for the following partners: Department of Homeland Security, FBI, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Texas Division of Emergency Management, Harris County Sheriff's Office, Harris County Fire Marshal's Office, Harris County Flood Control District and Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services.



Public Officials Workshop at TranStar.



The HCOHSEM logistics team focuses on a number of different functional areas including plan and technology development, as well as exercises and training. These functional areas, accompanied with today's dynamic threat environment and technology age, bring a limitless supply of challenges to the team.

LOGISTICS PLANNING

In 2012, HCOHSEM's logistics team completed a number of projects. Some of the highlights include the development and completion of the Harris County Regional Radio Testing plan, the Harris County Logistics plan and the EOC Guide.

The Radio Testing plan allows the office to streamline the radio testing handled by HCOHSEM and ensures that all mechanisms are operable for use at local, county and regional levels.

The Logistics plan defines how HCOHSEM manages requests when the EOC is activated. It defines the configuration of the logistics section during an event in order to efficiently deploy and demobilize teams when required.

The EOC Guide is intended to simplify the initial phases of EOC and incident management team operations. It provides specific information on how to set up the EOC. The guide also contains Incident Command System (ICS) position descriptions and duties checklists, as well as copies of the ICS forms.

In addition, the logistics team continues to participate in other regional planning efforts such as the Southeast Texas Regional WebEOC workgroup, which through collaboration with regional partners promotes development of the system. WebEOC is a web-enabled crisis information management system that provides real-time information sharing across all disciplines of emergency management.

Logistics also work closely and in coordination with other agencies such as the U.S. Coast Guard and Memorial Hermann Life Flight to improve communications between rescue aircraft and public safety personnel.

In 2012, the logistics team took part in three major full-scale exercises, the Humble ISD Full-Scale Exercise, which provided insight to communications operations within the county; the American Radio Relay League Field Day 2012 Communications Exercise, which allowed volunteer emergency radio operators to test and train on the equipment in the EOC's Radio Room; and the Hurricane Alexis Full Scale Exercise, which tested HCOHSEM's Logistics plan and the technology deployment process associated with HCOHSEM's Continuity of Operations plan.



HCOHSEM logistics staff inspects satellite dish.



Weekly radio test.

TRAINING & EXERCISES

Training and exercises are essential components to HCOHSEM's comprehensive approach to preparedness for homeland security and emergency management. Training and exercises provide a practical evaluation of the capabilities of local governments and their partners. HCOHSEM, in collaboration with federal, state and regional partners, conducts and participates in training and exercise events that strengthen the ability of the local emergency management community and build strong relationships.

In 2012, HCOHSEM hosted five exercises and participated in an additional 24 partner exercises throughout the region. The office hosted several state and federal courses, including a Public Officials Workshop and a Threat and Risk Assessment course.

PUBLIC OFFICIALS WORKSHOP

HCOHSEM hosted 32 elected officials at the Public Officials Workshop. This four-hour course introduces county judges and commissioners, mayors, city council members and other elected and appointed officials to emergency management in Texas.

In Texas, county judges have responsibility for emergency mitigation, preparedness and response and recovery activities within their local jurisdictions. These officials may appoint an Emergency Management Coordinator to manage day-to-day program activities. Most local governments use ICS as their incident management scheme. Under ICS, an incident commander typically directs the on-scene response from a field command post set up near the incident site. Local responders from other local jurisdictions, state agencies and the federal government may be asked to assist during large scale incidents.

ADDICKS/BARKER RESERVOIR FUNCTIONAL EXERCISE

The Addicks/Barker regional workgroup held a functional exercise to simulate a dam failure on the Addicks and Barker reservoirs. The goal of this exercise was to improve response and communica-

tions plans for the area. This exercise is part of a series of annual exercises used to improve existing plans. Participants included: HCOHSEM, Harris County Flood Control District, Fort Bend County, National Weather Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Texas Division of Emergency Management. The goal of this exercise series is to gradually expand out to other partners that surround the reservoirs.

FUNCTIONAL NEEDS SUPPORT SERVICES (FNSS) SEMINAR

The purpose of the Functional Needs Support Services (FNSS) Awareness Seminar was to provide emergency partners with guidance about the sheltering requirements of individuals with functional and access needs. The event focused on building partnerships, increasing resilience and identifying FNSS best practices.

The group also reviewed the Texas FNSS tool kit, a document designed to assist emergency planners in understanding the requirements related to sheltering and serving those who have access and functional needs. Attendees and speakers included local advocacy groups, non-profit organizations, and local and state emergency officials.

HARRIS COUNTY HURRICANE ALEXIS FULL-SCALE EXERCISE

The HCOHSEM Hurricane Alexis exercise was a two-day event hosted in August at the Reliant Center. This exercise brought together state, county and city officials with the objective of testing the county's Points of Distribution (POD) plan. The POD plan was developed from lessons learned following Hurricane Ike in 2008. This was the first time HCOHSEM tested this plan on a large scale.

HCOHSEM also tested its Continuity of Operations plan (COOP). The COOP ensures that HCOHSEM can continue to operate from a remote location if its primary office has been compromised until normal operations can be resumed. More than 140 people participated in this successful exercise.



Hurricane Alexis full-scale exercise took place at Reliant Center, August 2012.

HCOHSEM creates resilient communities through outreach and public education. A resilient community is one that can carry out recovery activities in ways that minimize social disruption and mitigate the effects of future events and impacts.

HARRIS COUNTY CITIZEN CORPS

The Harris County Citizen Corps Council celebrated its 10th anniversary in September 2012 in conjunction with National Preparedness Month.

This year, the Harris County Citizen Corps Council was recognized with the 2012 Jack Colley Leadership Award for its exemplary leadership and service to communities in the State of Texas.

Citizen Corps has worked for more than a decade alongside HCOHSEM and dozens of partner organizations to build a resilient community.

The Council creates opportunities for local residents to volunteer to help their communities prepare for and respond to emergencies. This is done by providing volunteers with the tools and training needed for preventing and handling threats of terrorism, crime and disasters of all kinds.

More than 80,000 volunteers have logged millions of training and service hours. The Citizen Corps membership includes 16,952 trained volunteers involved in 248 Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), 21,537 volunteers from 24 Volunteer in Police Service (VIPS) agencies; 2,653 volunteers from the Medical Reserve Corps; 5,515 volunteers from the 336 neighborhoods participating in the USA on Watch program; and 23 Fire Corps agencies. With more than 9 million hits, www.harriscountycitizen corps.com is a trusted source for preparedness information and training opportunities. Complementary to the website is the Harris County Citizen Corps Facebook page, which also provides a variety of emergency management news and information.

CERT RODEO

The 2012 CERT Rodeo brought together 37 CERT teams from around the region and state to demonstrate the knowledge and skills learned during their training. This competition allows participants to exercise their skills in various areas including: basic medical operations, search and rescue, fire suppression, incident command and other aspects of emergency preparedness and response. This annual event is representative of how trained disaster volunteers can help our community overcome daunting challenges when disaster strikes.

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE HURRICANE WORKSHOP

The Houston/Galveston National Weather Service hosted the 2012 Hurricane Workshop in June. More than 2,400 people attended this event where 80 CERT members served as greeters, runners, liaisons and HAM radio operators. The volunteers also helped at the Harris County Citizen Corps booth and assisted emergency management officials.

MIDLAND RADIO EVENT

HCOHSEM and Harris County Citizen Corps participated in a preparedness event with Midland Radio Corporation, KPRC Local 2 and HEB stores. The event was held to remind residents to prepare for hurricane season. A dozen CERT volunteers programed an estimated 500 all-hazard radios throughout the day.

FALLEN FIREFIGHTER FUNERAL

HCOHSEM and Harris County CERT teams assisted the Atascocita Volunteer Fire Department (AVFD) with a fallen firefighter's funeral last September. Captain Neal W. Smith, an AVFD firefighter, died from heat-related injuries sustained during training. CERT volunteers helped during the visitation and funeral service. Together they staged more than 45 apparatus, shuttled more than 150 firefighters and served hundreds of meals.



Fire suppression drill at the 2012 CERT Rodeo.



In 2012, HCOHSEM's Public Information Office continued to use technology to improve and expand its ability to provide the public and its regional partners with accurate and timely information. The explosion of media options demands that emergency managers explore all available means of public communications.

EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION

In 2012, Harris, Galveston, Fort Bend and Brazoria counties partnered with Clear Channel Outdoor to form the Gulf Coast Emergency Communications Network (GCECN). The purpose of the GCECN is to work with emergency managers to keep the public informed during a disaster.

Clear Channel Outdoor will disseminate vital emergency information to commuters on area highways through its network of digital billboards. During a crisis, emergency coordinators will provide the message content to be displayed for the targeted areas.

Currently, there are 15 digital billboards, with more in the works. These digital units can deliver instant messages in real time to residents in the areas in which they are deployed.

REGIONAL JOINT INFORMATION CENTER WEBSITE

The Harris County Regional Joint Information Center (JIC) website, www.readyharris.org, was completely redesigned in 2012. The JIC website was simplified, making it easier for residents to quickly access disaster information and connect with HCOHSEM social media. The local and regional news feeds were expanded, and the HCOHSEM Twitter feed is now displayed in real-time. Finally, the addition of the Google Translate gadget allows users to view the site and its content in 65 languages, improving information access to non-English speaking populations.

With the use of smartphones on the rise, HCOHSEM developed a companion JIC site optimized for smartphones and other mobile communication devices. This gives users the ability to access vital information such as disaster news, weather and traffic in a mobile-friendly format. Links to Harris County Alerts, the HCOHSEM Twitter feed and the full JIC site also are available. This site is accessible via the URL www.readyharris.org.

SOCIAL MEDIA

HCOHSEM continues to evolve in its use of social media. It now syndicates severe weather warnings, watch-

es and advisories directly to its Facebook and Twitter feeds. National Weather Service (NWS) information is posted to the sites simultaneously and in real-time. This provides residents with up-to-the-minute, actionable weather information 24 hours a day.

This strategy was validated during the July flooding event in northwest Harris County, when dozens of flood watches and warnings were issued over a 36-hour period, and in the last week of August, when Hurricane Isaac was in the Gulf of Mexico. In both cases, social media followers received updates directly from HCOHSEM and NWS in real time. While other social media posts told different aspects of the stories, accurate and timely weather information was posted when it was needed and without delay.

In 2012, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) launched the IS-42 Social Media in Emergency Management course. This course provides best practices including tools and techniques that can be used by emergency officials. HCOHSEM practices and tweets have been included in this course.

SHUTTLEBRATION

At the request of the Cities of Webster, Nassau Bay and Seabrook, HCOHSEM provided Joint Information Center (JIC) support during "Shuttlebration" weekend, June 1-3, 2012 - when Space Center Houston took delivery of a full-size space shuttle replica from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. The craft was transported by barge through Clear Lake and then down NASA Road 1 to its new home at Space Center Houston.

HCOHSEM volunteers and other partners assisted with media relations, publicized details of the lakeside celebration and monitored the traffic disruptions that occurred throughout the weekend.

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The HCOHSEM internship program provides students with a unique opportunity to apply classroom skills and theory to real-life work situations. This hands-on program is designed to strengthen fundamental emergency management concepts and communication skills that prepare interns for future employment opportunities. More than 20 students from colleges and universities within Texas have taken part of the internship program since 2009.



Space shuttle mock-up makes its way to its new home at Space Center Houston, June 2012.



Developing and delivering an effective public outreach program is a cornerstone of HCOHSEM's mission. HCOHSEM works closely with partners in the public and private sector, the faith-based community, school districts and other groups to promote an all-hazards approach to disaster preparedness.

SPECIAL EVENTS

In 2012, HCOHSEM participated in dozens of seminars and workshops throughout the county. The largest event each year is the annual Houston/Galveston NWS Hurricane Workshop at the George R. Brown Convention Center. Thousands of residents from around the region were able to interact with more than 50 exhibitors, ranging from government agencies to faith-based relief organizations to purveyors of emergency supplies. Attendees also learned more about hurricanes and hurricane preparedness from local emergency managers and meteorologists.

HCOHSEM also was a key exhibitor at the Ram Home Safety Expo at the Reliant Center. Teaming with CERT coordinators from the Harris County Citizen Corps, HCOHSEM engaged the public on disaster preparedness and volunteerism to create a resilient community. Expo attendees got a chance to see some of the communications equipment available to HCOHSEM in the event of a disaster, from powerful HAM radios to sophisticated multi-line portable telephone systems.

National Night Out festivities in the Rice Military neighborhood near Memorial Park.

AWARENESS

HCOHSEM also participated in the National Night Out (NNO) observance at Nellie Keys Park in the Rice Military neighborhood on October 2, 2012. Sponsored by local businesses and attended by elected officials, first responders and several hundred residents, the event was designed to strengthen neighborhood spirit and generate support for crime prevention programs. NNO is one of the nation's premier anti-crime programs involving more than 37 million Americans annually.

COMMUNITY

In 2012, HCOHSEM conducted more than 120 outreach events and presentations. In addition, the office logged more than 40 tours of the Harris County EOC and Houston TranStar to public officials, foreign dignitaries, students, senior citizen groups and other visitors. A total of 14 international delegations from 10 different countries visited Houston TranStar, the region's emergency management and transportation center.

During the year, HCOHSEM and Harris County Citizen Corps members distributed more than 13,000 hurricane brochures and well over 50,000 "disaster wheels," Ready DVD's, Citizen Corps publications and other preparedness items. Nearly all were available in multiple languages.

Harris County residents can request HCOHSEM presentations by visiting www.readyharris.org and completing the online request form.



Craig Fugate (FEMA), Mark Sloan (HCOHSEM) and Nim Kidd (Texas DEM) at local outreach event.



AWARDS & RECOGNITION



Regional Joint Information Center website, www.readyharris.org

HCOHSEM continues to be a national model of best practices in emergency planning, preparation, response and recovery.

HCOHSEM has received numerous awards and recognitions for its work in emergency management. In 2012, the Harris County Citizen Corps Council was recognized with the 2012 Jack Colley Leadership Award for its exemplary leadership and service to communities in the State of Texas.

This recognition is the highest honor bestowed upon a council or volunteer by the Texas Citizen Corps Council. The Citizen Corps' innovative practices and achievements make for a safer, stronger and better-prepared community.

In another milestone, HCOHSEM's use of social media has been featured as an example in federal, state and local programs. In 2011, FEMA published a Practice Note regarding HCOHSEM's

social media protocols, highlighting its George Bush Park fire tweets. In 2012, FEMA included HCOHSEM's tweets in the first slide of its new Social Media in Emergency Management course, the IS-042, which teaches social media fundamentals and its challenges.

Also in 2012, O'Brien's Response Management featured the Harris County Regional Joint Information Center (JIC) on its webinar series called the O'Brien's Strategy Forum. The JIC website, www.readyharris.org, is recognized for being a one-stop information resource for area residents. The site is home to real-time information invaluable during any disaster, including weather, traffic, rainfall data, utilities, school closings and advisories from public safety partners throughout the region. The process for information sharing was created with stakeholder input and significantly decreases the time and effort needed for effective emergency communication.



The Harris County Citizen Corps Council receives 2012 Jack Colley Leadership Award.



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