



COUNTY JUDGE ED EMMETT  
DIRECTOR

2015

## » ANNUAL REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

**T**he **Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (HCOHSEM)** is responsible for planning, integrating and implementing all emergency management and homeland security related activities for the county. It also provides the highest level of emergency preparedness for its residents.

Harris County is the nation's third largest county with more than 4.4 million residents. It is also one of the fastest growing counties; its unincorporated area alone could be the fifth largest city in the United States.

The State of Texas suffers from more natural disasters than any other state in the nation due to its size and diverse geography. Severe weather remains the biggest, and most common, threat for the residents of Harris County. In 2015, storms ravaged the area in May and October, claiming several lives and destroying thousands of homes.

"Events like these remind us of the region's vulnerability and the importance of having plans in place for when disaster strikes," said Harris County Judge Ed Emmett. "We are committed to working with the community and all of our emergency management partners to meet the overall goals of securing the county's infrastructure and resilience efforts."

### 2015 ACHIEVEMENTS

#### » HOMELAND SECURITY

- HCOHSEM expanded its homeland security capabilities by creating the Intelligence Task Force (ITF). The ITF consists of county law enforcement partner liaisons who participate in the collection and dissemination of intelligence, as well as assisting in the identification of response resources.
- HCOHSEM began hosting quarterly homeland security briefings for county leadership. The briefings feature topics on evolving risks and threats in the region.

#### » OPERATIONS

- On-call documented 3,742 emergency notifications, requiring more than 504 hours of staff time.
- Activated the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) 13 times in response to severe weather threats and HAZMAT incidents.
- The Memorial Day Flood resulted in a Level I (Maximum Readiness) Activation. Authorities reported eight fatalities and thousands of flooded homes during that period. Federal Emergency Management Agency flood insurance claims surpassed 3,300 flooded homes, with nearly 11,000 people requesting individual assistance.
- In October, two people died during a period of severe weather that included tornadoes and flooding. On Halloween day, the National Weather Service (NWS) reported eight inches of rain and confirmed that six tornadoes touched down in southeastern Harris County. Flooded roadways called for about 100 water rescues that morning and the Harris County Flood Control District reported that nearly 400 homes flooded.

[www.readyharris.org](http://www.readyharris.org)

## » TRAINING & EXERCISES

- HCOHSEM hosted 70 exercises and participated in more than 35 partner exercises.
- First ever hurricane social media functional exercise in the region.
- Power outage virtual tabletop exercise.

## » PREPAREDNESS

- Harris County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program increased to 23,734 trained members.
- More than 500 volunteers participated in the 2015 CERT Rodeo.
- Recognized 18 area volunteers with the President's Lifetime Achievement Service Award.

## » COMMUNICATIONS

- Handled 1,100 media inquiries and interviews.
- Social media posts surpassed 1,400.
- Produced four broadcast-quality television and radio public service announcements.
- Updated the Regional Joint Information Center website to improve functionality and mobile usage.
- Hosted several severe weather joint news conferences.
- Hosted two social media classes.

## » PUBLIC EDUCATION

- Took part in more than 100 outreach events and presentations. Among these, the NWS Hurricane Workshop, the NASA/Johnson Space Center Environmental Fair, the United Airlines Safety & Wellness Fair and the Harris Health Fairs at Lyndon B. Johnson and Ben Taub hospitals.
- Continued collaboration with industry partners and conducted more than 20 preparedness presentations for companies including BG Group, Chevron, Cobalt, ExxonMobil, Kuraray America and Wood Mustang Group.
- Close to 2,500 visitors toured the EOC and Houston TranStar, including dignitaries from China, Dubai, Poland, Taiwan, Turkey and Wales.

## » PLANNING

- Updated four annexes and 46 internal plans, created nine internal plans and produced 132 mapping products. The Basic Plan and four annexes were submitted to the state for approval.
- Modified the Hurricane Plan to include pre-landfall objectives for short notice events and evacuation guidance based on projected storm surge.
- Adopted an updated Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan that includes 33 jurisdictions, four private non-profits and several stakeholders.
- Created a Power Outage Plan that addresses how HCOHSEM will respond to power outages, both short and long-term.
- Recognized as a FEMA Mitigation Best Practice for Collaborative Community Resilience: Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Planning.

## » LOGISTICS

- Designed and completed its new state-of-the-art Communications Center to complement EOC operations.
- Completed its new Logistics Technology Room that allows for the management, testing and maintenance of communications equipment.
- Hosted Communications Unit Leader, Communications Technician, Auxiliary Communications and national radio operator courses.
- Selected as a beta site for testing of the National High Frequency Email System with the Federal Shared Resources program.