Mission Statement

The Harris County Office of Homeland Security & 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.
During the past year, the Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (HCOHSEM) has worked with federal, state and local partners to increase and strengthen the county’s capabilities and capacity to prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies both large and small.

Thankfully 2010 was less chaotic than past years, in which severe weather, long droughts and hurricanes impacted our area. As a result, HCOHSEM was able to concentrate on training, mitigation and providing assistance to local governments. HCOHSEM’s accomplishments in 2010 included the development of a Business Commodities Plan and the revision of the Harris County All Hazard Mitigation Plan.

The Business Commodities Plan will help by providing the necessary information to support local government response efforts. It is designed to identify communities that have been affected by a disaster and determine the extent of the damage so they can receive the necessary assistance specific to their needs.

The Hazard Mitigation Plan outlines how the county will respond to an incident. It is a prerequisite for eligibility to government mitigation funds, but most of all it provides general guidance for the handling of emergency situations.

HCOHSEM also continued its vigorous public education and outreach program in our community, promoting the importance of disaster preparedness to businesses and people of all ages.

We do not know what 2011 will bring, but keeping our community safe depends on the involvement of every individual.

Sincerely,

County Judge Ed Emmett, Director
Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management
Activity Distribution by Type for 2010
Including Event Total and Percentage

- Activations/Responses/Monitoring: 938 (41%)
- Inter-Agency Meeting: 184 (8%)
- Media Inquiry & Interview: 273 (12%)
- Exercise/Drill/Training: 409 (18%)
- LEPC/CAP/CAC Meeting: 297 (13%)
- Communication Products: 57 (2%)
- Presentation/Outreach Event: 48 (2%)
- HCEOC & TranStar Tours: 104 (4%)
Harris County has a population of more than four million people, making it the third-largest county in the United States. There are 34 cities in Harris County, including Houston, the nation’s fourth-largest city. Harris County also is home to the Port of Houston and the nation’s largest petrochemical complex.

Its location makes Harris County prone to petrochemical hazards and vulnerable to hurricanes; nevertheless, HCOHSEM stands ready to activate its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for any natural or man-made disaster. In the past, the EOC has activated for weather events (including floods, hurricanes and wildfires) to incidents involving pandemics, hazardous materials and industrial accidents.

Harris County has made a strong effort to gather regional input and participation so as to become a best practice for regional planning. In doing so, the HCOHSEM is able to assist jurisdictions with basic planning concepts so that all emergency partners are prepared to respond to any type of disaster. Teamwork and good communication skills allow us to assist others. The success that this brings is the ability to mount an all-hazards approach to making our community more resilient.

In 2010, FEMA approved HCOHSEM’s revised Local Mitigation Action Plan. The Basic Plan and its 22 annexes outline how the county will respond to an incident. HCOHSEM also wrote a Business Commodities Plan designed to work in conjunction with the Harris County Points of Distribution (POD) plan. The Business Commodities Plan establishes how a Business Commodities Report will be created to provide a real time operational decision making tool with the necessary information to support local government response efforts, specifically to assist in determining the need to open or close POD locations in Harris County.

New technology, including audio visual equipment and new radios, has brought the EOC up to date. Training and exercises have educated local officials and emergency partners on the most effective way to prepare for, respond to and recover from a disaster. HCOHSEM’s vigorous public education and outreach efforts also attribute to creating a more resilient community.

HCOHSEM is on alert 24/7 and is always ready to exercise its basic emergency management plan. In doing so, the office is meeting the growing expectations of emergency management officials by delivering:

• Coordination and maintenance of a comprehensive emergency management plan;
• Successful activation of the EOC to coordinate and support efforts in response to emergencies and disasters;
• Dynamic public education and outreach programs;
• Timely and accurate information to residents, elected officials, the media, partners and other stakeholders; and
• Comprehensive classes, drills and exercises to help partner agencies prepare for and respond to emergencies.
Hurricanes Karl, Igor and Julia (from left to right on Sept. 16) were part of the onslaught of Atlantic storms in 2010.
The 2010 Atlantic hurricane season was one of the busiest on record. A total of 19 named storms formed in the Atlantic Basin. Of those, 12 became hurricanes and five reached major hurricane status of Category 3 or higher. An average season produces 11 named storms, six hurricanes and two major hurricanes.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), large-scale climate features strongly influenced last year’s hurricane activity. Record warm Atlantic waters, combined with the favorable winds coming off Africa and weak wind shear aided by La Niña energized developing storms.

NOAA said the jet stream’s position contributed to warm and dry conditions in the eastern United States and acted as a barrier that kept many storms over open water. Also, because many storms formed in the extreme eastern Atlantic, they curved back out to sea without threatening land.

HCOHSEM monitored all hurricanes throughout the 2010 season, keeping a close eye on Hurricane Alex, Tropical Depression #2 and Tropical Storm Hermine that had Texas in their paths.

Apart from heavy rain, Harris County fared well; however, some areas in South Texas are still recovering from the effects of Hurricane Alex and Tropical Storm Hermine that made landfall in northern Mexico causing heavy rain, mudslides and deadly flooding.

### Hurricane Season

![2010 Atlantic Storm Tracks](image)

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Harris County Emergency Operations Center (EOC).
Since its inception, HCOHSEM has worked to build a shared vision and collaboration with local, state and federal partners to prevent, protect against, respond to and recover from man-made incidents and other disasters. Partner agencies include the Harris County Sheriff’s Office, Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Coast Guard, Federal Communications Commission, State of Texas, the local Fusion Center, countless first responder organizations and many others.

HCOHSEM is contributing to regional security efforts by maintaining a database of critical infrastructure and key resources, engaging local jurisdictions in emergency planning, disseminating accurate and timely information to stakeholders, threat and risk assessment and monitoring significant high-profile events.

**GRANTS**

In an effort to maintain consistent progress, HCOHSEM receives federal grant funds. Grant funds are essential in the support of our operations and are spent on personnel, enhancements to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and for Harris County Citizen Corps programs.

In 2010, Harris County was awarded $12.9 million from the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI), $7.1 million in Port Security Grant Program funds, $368,083 from the State Homeland Security Grant Program and $233,333 from the Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant.

**THE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER**

The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) has recently been enhanced to include GIS and digital real-time mapping capabilities. Through grant funding, the EOC will expand to maintain regional technological coordination and provide workstation capabilities to more than 100 responders during activations.

**CITIZEN CORPS PROGRAM**

The Harris County Citizen Corps Council is a nationally recognized program that coordinates with such volunteer groups as the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the United Way and other Citizen Corps partners to identify volunteer opportunities. The Citizen Corps programs include the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), the USA on Watch/Neighborhood Watch Program, Volunteers in Police Service, Fire Corps and the Medical Reserve Corps.

Harris County Citizen Corps has earned numerous awards for effectively supporting emergency services year round, including Honorable Mention in the 2010 National Citizen Corps Achievement Awards.

**SUPPORTING LOCAL JURISDICTIONS**

In 2010, homeland security funds were used to enhance Baytown’s capability for urban search and rescue, flood water and confined space response. This has helped promote the self-sufficiency of the team as it provides response and support.
Overturned truck on Haden Road spills hydrochloric acid.
Traditionally, HCOHSEM does not maintain a tactical command and control Operations Section. The position within the National Incident Management System/Incident Command Structure is more of communications and coordination. Various operational units responding to major incidents coordinate their response and recovery actions through the Harris County EOC.

**ON-CALL**
The On-Call program provides our response partners with 24-hour access to a trained staff member for the reporting of significant events and after-hour resource requests. The calls range from severe weather inquiries to assistance requests for high impact chemical spills.

In 2010, On-call received 860 documented notifications requiring more than 480 hours of staff time.

**INDUSTRY**
HCOHSEM’s Operations team was involved with various industrial and hazardous material emergencies during the year. This includes supporting the Harris County Hazmat team with on-scene safety, emergency communications to community leaders and serving as liaison with partner agencies.

In general, the department assists the Texas Division of Emergency Management, State Operations Center, U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the National Response Center to gather information on industrial incidents.

Some major incidents in 2010 included: shutting down SH 225 and providing on-scene support during a vapor release; HCOHSEM and Harris County Hazmat provided support when a facility in Tomball caught fire and burned down; our industry liaison also responded to an incident involving an overturned gasoline tanker truck in Pasadena.

**HURRICANE STATUS REPORTING SYSTEM**
The Hurricane Status Reporting System allows industries to populate their status during a hurricane, in regard to whether their facility is in operation, whether employees are on the facility or if they have evacuated and the location they are at. The Industry Essential Personnel Credential System, in the event that there is an evacuation zone declared, allows personnel to stay within the area.

To be fully prepared for any industrial emergencies, the department is involved in Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPC), East Harris County Manufacturers Association (EHCMA) Security Committee, Captain of the Port’s Port Coordination Team (PCT), Channel Industry Mutual Aid (CIMA) Training Committee and numerous other related efforts.

TDEM Chief Nim Kidd and Harris Co. EMC Mark Sloan.
Emergency information planning will improve the Regional Joint Information Center.
During recovery efforts immediately following Hurricane Ike in 2008, HCOHSEM identified the need to develop and use partnerships with commodities providers to determine retail availability of necessary life-sustaining goods after a disaster affects the county. Therefore, a Business Commodities Plan was developed to work in conjunction with the Harris County Points of Distribution (POD) plan. A Business Commodities Report creates real-time operational decision-making tools with the necessary information to support local government response efforts, specifically to assist in determining the need to open or close POD locations in Harris County. The plan enables HCOHSEM to develop and maintain partnerships with private sector commodities providers, identify communities that have been affected by a disaster and determine the extent of damage, compile Business Commodities reports in a timely and efficient manner to provide county officials with essential information that can be used during response and recovery efforts. HCOHSEM’s Business Commodities Plan was listed as a best practice on the FEMA Public-Private Partnerships for Emergency Preparedness web page.

In an effort to maintain constant preparedness, the Planning section takes part in the Harris County All-Hazard Mitigation Plan. Hazard Mitigation means to reduce or alleviate the loss of life, injuries and property resulting from natural and man-made hazards through long-term strategies. The Hazard Mitigation Plan itself is a prerequisite for eligibility to state and federal mitigation grant funding, and it is updated every five years. There are 22 other incorporated jurisdictions in Harris County that participate in making appropriate changes and upgrades, making them eligible for funding through the updated plan.

**ANNEXES**

HCOHSEM maintains its advanced emergency management profile by submitting updated annexes to the state for its approval, and it updated an additional four annexes from the previous year. Meetings are being held with other county emergency management coordinators within the Houston-Galveston Area Council region, bringing planning outside of Harris County to the 13-county area, so as to coordinate planning regionally and enable continuity of operations.

**TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE REGISTRY**

HCOHSEM plays a critical role in serving people with functional access needs (formerly special needs), both before and during emergencies. Every year, designated planners update the transportation registry list for Harris County and participate in several projects aimed to help those requiring evacuation assistance. Individuals who need a ride may call 2-1-1 to register for evacuation transportation.

Trained specialists will take personal contact information, asking additional questions about any special medical needs that may affect the type of transportation a person needs. There are currently 26,771 individuals registered in the Transportation Assistance Registry (TAR) system.

Additionally, close to 80 hurricane preparedness presentations were conducted for people needing assistance, including homeless veterans, senior community centers and senior living facilities.
Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) operators working from EOC.
The HCOHSEM Logistics section worked diligently on EOC updates in 2010. Additional audio visual equipment was installed to allow for better monitoring of open-source information. Other projects included working with the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) group to develop a POD communications plan and working with the Southeast Texas Trauma Regional Advisory Council to install a satellite redundant data network.

To bring interoperability to a new level, Logistics acquired 30 new radios for the 800 megahertz digital system through UASI grant funds and revamped the radio room. Amateur radio continues to be an important communication tool in the EOC. The EOC radio system uses various frequencies to securely send and receive time sensitive information, and video images can be transmitted using the WebLink wireless system. 2010 marked ARES’ 75th anniversary, which has played a role in emergency communications since its founding and has always worked to serve others through cooperation with local groups. The program has shown great versatility and flexibility over time and has worked to further improve its interoperability.

Through our radio operations center, HCOHSEM assisted in locating a Houstonian traveling to Haiti on a humanitarian mission when the January 2010 Haitian earthquake occurred. In a test of its capabilities, HCOHSEM’s radio also made contact with the International Space Station.

Thanks to grant funding, two additional regional planners were assigned to the Logistics team. Along with providing the greatly needed assistance to fulfill the many tasks in the Logistics section, the planners are working on a regional logistics plan and Volunteer Reception Center training efforts. Web EOC is a regional planning tool used to create a common operating picture during large scale incidents.

Finally, the office’s new technology systems allows for training and emergency response, while also making inventory control of cache items automated. All of these enhanced capabilities benefit the entire region because they allow HCOHSEM to be more productive, efficient, and responsive to all needs.

GIS
In 2010, the GIS department generated more than 300 maps for internal requests and external partners. This work included maps of licensed child care and after-school program facilities, floor plans for the 2010 hurricane conference at the George R. Brown Convention Center, aerial maps of all potential POD sites, and the mapping of CERT teams by zip code.
Katy ISD 2010 drill.
HCOHSEM believes that training and exercises are essential components in its comprehensive approach to preparedness for homeland security and emergency management. Training and exercises provide opportunities for applied training, as well as practical evaluation of the capabilities of local governments and their partners.

In 2010, HCOHSEM hosted six training exercises and participated in an additional 15 partner exercises. Our office held 14 Web EOC training sessions for partners on the software used during activations, which involved around 180 participants. There were two public official workshops hosted for elected officials, and four out-of-state trainings were brought to the region. The G-200 Public Officials workshops had about 20 participants, and the Animal Disease Response Training course had about 40 participants.

**PUBLIC OFFICIALS WORKSHOP**

This four-hour course is designed to introduce county judges and commissioners, mayors, city council members and other elected and appointed officials to emergency management in Texas. This course addresses the legal authorities for emergency management in Texas, the local, state, and federal organization for emergency management, the local emergency management functions and local responsibilities during emergencies.

**HARRIS COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICES TABLETOP DRILL**

The Harris County Community Services Department holds a biannual tabletop drill to bring together organizations under Annex O of the Harris County Basic Plan. The tabletop brings together case managers in order to prepare for the aftermath of a disaster incident. The focus of the April 2010 drill was response after a winter freeze event.

**TEXAS CATASTROPHIC PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE OPERATIONS (CATPRO) FUNCTIONAL EXERCISE**

The CatPRO program consists of a series of exercises intended to help jurisdictions along the coast, as well as hosting jurisdictions, prepare for a catastrophic hurricane. The focus of the 2010 Functional Drill was Harris County’s response in the recovery phase after a direct hit from a Category 3 storm. The Harris County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) hosted over 41 county departments and partner agencies during this drill. The Harris County Regional Joint Information Center (JIC) held their drill simultaneously.

**KATY ISD FULL-SCALE DRILL (OCTOBER 11, 2010)**

The Katy Independent School District held a full-scale exercise to simulate a district-wide emergency. The goal of the exercise is to improve emergency response plans and rehearse response operations for both the school district and area emergency responders to a bomb threat and explosion. Participants included: more than 100 area emergency responders, including Memorial Hermann Katy Hospital, Christus St. Catherine’s, Texas Children’s Hospital - West Campus, West I-10 Fire Department and EMS, Community Fire Department, Texas Department of Public Safety, Harris County Sheriff’s Office and Harris County Fire Marshal’s Office. More than 150 Katy ISD students from the district’s high schools and staff also participated.
Harris County Citizen Corps CERT teams at annual competition.
The Harris County Citizen Corps is committed to creating opportunities for volunteers to help the community prepare for and respond to emergencies. The primary goal is to have all residents participate in making the community safer by providing them the tools and training needed to create resilient communities.

With more than a million website hits this past year, the Citizen Corps’ 80,000 plus members get preparedness information through the Internet, from both the Citizen Corps website and Facebook. The latter was established to keep up with the times and to use social media to communicate with the community.

To better serve our diverse community, the Harris County Citizen Corps uses its bilingual website to promote preparedness and volunteerism and it offers Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training in Spanish. Teen CERT in Harris County is considered a national training model. Training includes light search and rescue, disaster psychology, terrorism, 911 communications, hazardous materials and responder roles. Since its inception, it has coordinated with 56 high schools and it has trained more than 3,600 high school students.

To date, volunteers and partner organizations have logged more than 1.4 million volunteer hours serving our community. Harris County Citizen Corps has earned numerous awards for effectively supporting emergency services year round, including Honorable Mention in the 2010 National Citizen Corps Achievement Awards.

For more information about Harris County Citizen Corps, go to www.harriscountycitizencorps.com.
Local weather anchors meet with HCOHSEM officials.

Left to Right: Tim Heller (KTRK), Frank Billingsley (KPRC), Gene Norman (Khou) and Keith Monahan (KIAH).
The HCOHSEM Public Information Office keeps its emergency management partners and area residents informed about any and all emergency situations that have a direct impact on the community. It also uses its resources to warn and prepare residents before an incident occurs by promoting hurricane and disaster preparedness all year long.

2010 marked the launch of the Regional Joint Information Center (JIC) website. The site allows partners to post news releases and updates that need to reach the community. It also links to news from various sources and serves as a place where residents can go for the latest information. The site acts as a dashboard where residents can find out about weather, traffic, school closings and what first responders are doing. They can also sign up for updates which will be delivered directly to their email.

**REGIONAL PUBLIC INFORMATION PLAN**

The HCOHSEM is committed to serving Harris County residents with emergency response services that meet or exceed national response standards and citizen expectations. Its Emergency Public Information Plan (EPIP) is an important element of the regional response plan aimed at protecting the public, property and the environment.

The regional response plan and annexes emphasize close coordination and collaboration between the jurisdictions and agencies operating in the greater Harris County region. Only through close coordination can public expectations and the goals of protecting the public, property and the environment be met.

In a major event the public, the media and key stakeholders have an exceptionally high demand for information. Their safety, sense of security and future hopes may ride on information that is difficult to acquire, may be inaccurate and changes frequently.

The goal of a multi-agency response organization is to speak with one voice and to become established as the most dependable and credible source of information about the event.

**JIC EXERCISE**

The first Regional JIC Exercise took place last October. It was a very challenging exercise because it ran parallel to the CatPRO; nevertheless, it was very successful in bringing core partners together to practice their communication strategies. Some partners participated at the JIC location in the TranStar building, others worked remotely from their offices and the majority agreed that by maintaining a centralized communication facility, resources can be better managed and duplication of effort is minimized. The use of a JIC allows for tracking and maintaining records and information, as well as consistent messages to the public. Throughout the year, HCOHSEM holds meetings with public information officers from partner agencies to update them on JIC plans and upcoming events.

**PUBLIC INFORMATION**

In 2010, HCOHSEM distributed 938 communications products, handled 297 media inquiries and hosted 104 tours of the EOC. It also ran a successful bilingual public service campaign urging residents to prepare for hurricane season. The office also produced a DVD introduction to the EOC that is used during tours. Communications also worked with Boat People SOS to translate public safety messages into Vietnamese, and in order to better serve our deaf and hard of hearing community, the Ready DVD was translated into American Sign Language.
Chinese delegation tours the EOC.
Just as the 2010 hurricane season was one of the busiest on record, HCOHSEM’s public outreach and education efforts were equally as active. HCOHSEM worked closely with faith-based organizations, the business community and civic groups to promote disaster preparedness at all levels.

HCOHSEM once more promoted and participated in numerous seminars and workshops to promote preparedness. One of the largest, the annual Houston/Galveston National Weather Service Hurricane Workshop is an event that has grown and garnered national attention and recognition for its effort to prepare residents before hurricane season through presentations, interactive exhibits, hurricane season forecasting and more.

In November, for National Preparedness Month, HCOHSEM supported and promoted the national Ready Campaign to encourage Americans to work together to take concrete actions toward emergency preparedness, and in particular, focus on making an emergency plan.

For National Night Out, HCOHSEM partnered with Harris County Commissioners Court, the Harris County Fire Marshal’s Office, Harris County Sheriff’s Office, Harris County Citizen Corps, local constable precincts and fire departments to promote one of the largest National Night Out events in the country.

In all, HCOHSEM conducted more than 184 outreach events and presentations and more than 104 tours of the Harris County Emergency Operations Center and Houston TranStar to a diverse set of community and business groups.

Numerous HCOHSEM hurricane brochures, disaster guides, Ready DVD’s, Citizen Corps publications and other educational items were distributed to the public in multilanguage formats.

One of the most popular items and visual aids is the Harris County evacuation zip code map which helps educate residents about the region’s hurricane evacuation zones. The map was updated in 2010 and is included in all HCOHSEM brochures and preparedness presentations.
Harris County hosts numerous meetings with local, state, national and international organizations that visit its Emergency Operations Center to study lessons learned and best practices. Countries that visited in 2010 include:

Albania
Antigua and Barbuda
Argentina
The Bahamas
Bulgaria
China
Colombia
Costa Rica
Dominican Republic
Egypt
El Salvador
France
Georgia
Grenada
Guatemala
Haiti
Israel
Jamaica
Jordan
Lithuania
Macedonia
Malaysia
Mexico
Mongolia
Netherlands
Nicaragua
Pakistan
Paraguay
Poland
Romania
Singapore
Sudan
Taiwan
Tanzania
Trinidad and Tobago
Turkey
United Kingdom
Vietnam
EIGHT FUNDAMENTAL EMERGENCY PLANNING PRINCIPLES TO INCREASE OUR COMMUNITY’S LEVEL OF PREPAREDNESS

1. Anticipate both active and passive resistance to the planning process and develop strategies to manage these obstacles.

2. Address all hazards to which the community is exposed.

3. Include all response organizations, seek their participation, commitment and clearly defined agreement.

4. Base pre-impact planning on accurate assumptions about the threat, about typical human behavior in disaster and about likely support from external sources such as state and federal agencies.

5. Identify the types of emergency response actions that are most likely to be appropriate.

6. Address the linkage of emergency response to disaster recovery.

7. Provide for training and evaluation of the emergency response organization at all levels – individual, team, department and community.

8. Recognize that emergency planning is a continuing process.

Teen CERT participants at 2010 CERT Rodeo