Houston skyline.
Courtesy of Houston TranStar.
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INTRODUCTION

DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE

County Judge Ed Emmett, Director
Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management
Harris County, one of the fastest growing counties in the nation, accomplished a major milestone in 2014 with the completion of its new Emergency Operations Center (EOC). This new state-of-the-art facility provides additional space and technology capabilities for regional collaboration during emergencies to keep the public safe and well-informed.

The new facility is larger and better equipped to monitor incidents of any size and scope. It is designed to mitigate impacts of emergencies on a regional scale. In a region with more declared disasters than most states, the formula for success is the engagement of all levels of government, the community and volunteer organizations.

The new EOC is part of the ongoing Houston TranStar building expansion that makes regional emergency and transportation management more efficient. It provides the Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (HCOHSEM) and its key partners the ability to better respond to major emergencies and keep traffic moving.

HCOHSEM also maintains the Regional Joint Information Center (RJIC), which coordinates emergency public information in the nation’s tenth-largest media market during disasters. The RJIC serves as a central place to coordinate multi-agency efforts to issue timely information to emergency management partners, the public and the news media.

HCOHSEM knows that the most successful response to a disaster comes through coordination and collaboration, and the new EOC is ready for the next emergency.

Sincerely,

County Judge Ed Emmett, Director
Harris County Office of Homeland Security & Emergency Management
Harris County Emergency Operations Center (EOC).
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.

Flooding near the Galleria, September 19, 2014.
West Sam Houston Parkway. 
Courtesy of Harris County 
Toll Road Authority
HCOHSEM is nationally recognized for its regional and collaborative approach to emergency preparedness and response that is key to serving the county’s more than 4.3 million residents spread over 1,778 square miles. Through a comprehensive all-hazards approach, HCOHSEM coordinates with emergency managers, first responders, public safety officials and healthcare professionals throughout the region to plan and prepare for disasters, whether natural or man-made.

HCOHSEM works year-round to prepare for, mitigate against, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters, big and small. It exists to enhance safety and preparedness in Harris County through strong leadership, collaboration and meaningful partnerships. In the event of a large-scale emergency, HCOHSEM works with federal, state, local, public and private sector partners to ensure swift and effective recovery efforts.

Its proximity to the Gulf of Mexico makes Harris County especially vulnerable to hurricanes. However, other incidents including floods, winter storms, wildfires, hazardous materials and industrial accidents affect the area more often.

Harris County has the largest population in Texas, making it the third-most populous county in the United States. Harris County is composed of 34 cities including Houston, the nation’s fourth-largest city. The county alone has 54 fire departments, more than 125 law enforcement agencies, 22 major watersheds and more than 1,200 municipal and public utility districts.

Trestle fire along the San Jacinto River, May 5, 2014.
HURRICANE SEASON

 Courtesy of NOAA.
The United States experienced another relatively quiet Atlantic hurricane season that only produced eight named storms. Six of those storms strengthened into hurricanes and two became major hurricanes. According to forecasters at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), a strong wind shear and atmospheric instability in the Atlantic slowed down cyclonic activity in 2014.

The only tropical system to directly impact the United States in 2014 was Hurricane Arthur, which made landfall in eastern North Carolina on July 3rd with winds of 100 mph.

Only two storms made their way into the Gulf of Mexico, but neither affected the Texas coast, which has not seen a hurricane since 2008 when Hurricane Ike struck Galveston Island and moved inland to Harris County.

HCOHSEM welcomed the start of hurricane season from its new state-of-the-art Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The new facility is larger and better equipped to monitor incidents and mitigate problems during regional emergencies.
HOMELAND SECURITY

Houston TranStar Traffic Control Command Center.
Through effective situational awareness, HCOHSEM prepares the community, protects lives and plans for all natural and man-made threats. It also develops, reviews and coordinates emergency management programs to meet the region’s homeland security needs.


This document addresses how Harris County develops and processes information related to critical infrastructure and key resources. It describes how Harris County identifies CIKR, and how profiles of the CIKR are developed. The information is used to support collaborative critical infrastructure security and resiliency plans, and provides necessary information to support personnel during response and recovery efforts.

**PARTNERS IN HOMELAND SECURITY**

Partnerships establish and pursue a set of mutual goals and priorities, and employ common structures that facilitate information sharing and collaborative problem solving.

HCOHSEM understands that it is critical to remain focused on strengthening partnerships through increased communication and coordination to meet the overall goals of securing the county’s critical infrastructure.

**STATE, LOCAL, TRIBAL & TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENT COORDINATING COUNCIL**

Harris County’s Emergency Management Coordinator serves on the State, Local, Tribal and Territorial Government Coordinating Council (SLTTGCC). The SLTTGCC supports geographically diverse partnerships to ensure that state, local, tribal and territorial officials play an integral role in national critical infrastructure protection and resilience efforts.
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

HCOHSEM’s Public Information Officer serves on the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) Communications Security, Reliability and Interoperability Council (CSRIC). The CSRIC’s mission is to provide recommendations to the FCC to ensure optimal security and reliability of communications systems, including telecommunications, media and public safety. The CSRIC has been addressing issues such as the transition to the next generation of 911, emergency alerting and cybersecurity.

CENTRAL TEXAS COASTAL AREA COMMITTEE

HCOHSEM works closely with the United States Coast Guard on the Central Texas Coastal Area Committee (CTCAC). CTCAC serves as the spill preparedness planning body responsible for developing the Area Contingency Plan (ACP) required under the Oil Pollution Act of 1990. The ACP provides strategies for a coordinated multi-agency response to an oil spill, chemical release or marine fire occurring in navigable waters within or along the central Texas coasts of Brazoria, Chambers, Galveston and Harris counties.

United States Coast Guard (USCG) patrols oil and chemical plants. Courtesy of USCG.
The Harris County Sheriff’s Office (HCSO) Emergency Management Unit (EMU) at TranStar assists with daily operations, situational awareness and training events. Deputies also help coordinate planning and response activities with local law-enforcement organizations and federal agency partners. They also maintain and update homeland security emergency plans and participate in various drills, EOC activations and community outreach programs.

In 2014, HCSO participated in numerous events and activities including the Hot Zone Conference, Cities of Harris County meetings, Texas Emergency Management Conference, Southeast Texas Regional Advisory Council’s Mass Casualty Management Symposium, the Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Initiative workshop, and the “Hurricane Joe” Table Top Exercise at Sam Houston State University’s Command Simulation Suite. Additionally, in collaboration with Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services, EMU personnel review and update plans related to the Strategic National Stockpile implementation program.

The EMU works with the Industrial Liaison, who is embedded with the Channel Industry Mutual Aid and serves as forward observer to all hazardous material spills that occur land-side along the Houston Ship Channel. HCSO personnel at the Security Monitoring and Assessment Group remotely monitor, via a network of overt and covert methods, all suspicious activities that threaten the Houston Ship Channel.
Emergencies in an area as large as Harris County require a coordinated response. HCOHSEM’s role includes incident monitoring, information gathering and dissemination, and responding to incidents that require interagency coordination.

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

HCOHSEM’s EOC brings together decision makers to coordinate the flow of information and strategy development. Numerous organizations and government agencies send representatives during an EOC activation, depending on the type and severity of the emergency.

In 2014, HCOHSEM’s new EOC was completed just in time for the start of hurricane season. This new state-of-the-art center provides additional space and technology capabilities for regional collaboration during emergencies. During an activation, it houses local, state, federal and private sector partners.

The new facility is part of the Houston TranStar building expansion project that has added 26,000 square feet of new floor space and renovated 11,000 square feet of existing space. The building has gained 3,360 square feet of conference space that can be converted to support disaster responders when needed. This space is also available for training, exercises and drills. Other amenities include additional elevators, bathrooms, showers and sleeping quarters.

The EOC was activated 10 times in 2014.

ON-CALL

HCOHSEM is a 24/7 operation. It continuously monitors severe weather, industrial hazards, terrorism alerts and other developing situations around the county.

When an emergency occurs, HCOHSEM is notified and available to assist with resource requests. Assigned on-call personnel can be dispatched as liaisons for major emergencies and disaster scene coordination.

In 2014, HCOHSEM documented 2,963 notifications, requiring more than 582 hours of staff time.

INDUSTRY

HCOHSEM’s Industrial Liaison responds to industrial incidents and supports the Harris County Hazardous Materials Response Team on large-scale events. The liaison provides updates and information for HCOHSEM and its stakeholders and also serves as an on-scene safety officer.

HCOHSEM is active in nine Industry Community Advisory Councils and panels and multiple Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs); and works with many fire and EMS associations and workgroups.

The Industrial Liaison works from the USCG Sector Houston-Galveston facility at Ellington Field, whose location provides better access and a more rapid response to the industrial areas of east Harris County.

In 2014, HCOHSEM responded to the following industrial incidents:

- Pipeline Crude Oil Leak
- Pearland Hazmat/Auto Parts Fire
- Texas City Y Oil Spill
- Tank Truck Rollover/Molten Sealant Spill
- Recycling Plant Fire
- San Jacinto River Structure Fire
- Fuel Tanker Rollover/Diesel Spill
- Vinyl Acetate Pipeline Spill
- ITC Benzene Spill
- South Houston Warehouse Fire
- Baytown Crude Oil Tank Explosion
- Methyl Mercaptan Leak

The Texas City Y oil spill was the largest incident in the Gulf of Mexico since Deepwater Horizon in 2010.
Fuel tanker rollover in north Harris County, May 6, 2014.
HCOHSEM maintains, develops and updates numerous emergency plans to ensure that Harris County is ready to respond to a variety of threats and hazards. These plans follow local, state and federal requirements.

In 2014, HCOHSEM’s Planning Section:
- Updated 23 annexes
- Updated 29 internal plans
- Created three new internal plans/guidance
- Updated 41 of 44 existing Standard Operating Guidelines
- Distributed 11 Harris County plans to 22 different jurisdictions
- Updated County Mutual Aid Agreements and sent them to all 34 jurisdictions within Harris County and the 12 counties within the Houston-Galveston Area Council region

ACTIVE SHOOTER PLAN
The Active Shooter Plan provides guidance and procedures for coordinating resources to support emergency response to an active shooter/mass casualty incident that affects the unincorporated areas of Harris County. This plan will be used in situations lasting longer than 12 hours or requiring additional assistance. HCOHSEM coordinates with emergency response organizations that are required to plan, train for and respond to an active shooter/mass casualty incident.

VESSEL INCIDENT PLAN
The Vessel Incident Plan provides for a coordinated and effective shore-side response to a marine incident involving a vessel with displaced passengers and crew, a vessel oil spill discharge or a vessel public health concern affecting Harris County. Each year, there are more than 7,700 vessel calls at the Port of Houston, which ranks first in the country in foreign waterborne tonnage and second in overall total tonnage.

FUNCTIONAL NEEDS SUPPORT SERVICE GUIDANCE
The Functional Needs Support Service Guidance provides an overview of the concepts and responsibilities for providing coordinated resources to people with access and functional needs. In addition, it establishes a process for undertaking emergency preparedness, response and recovery activities that are inclusive of persons with access and functional needs, and are in compliance with the National Incident Management System.

GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS
HCOHSEM uses Geographical Information Systems (GIS) for situational awareness. GIS has the ability to map and analyze all types of hazards. It can help emergency managers plan evacuations, identify ideal locations for prepositioning assets, locate shelters and track resources. GIS models and simulation capabilities also help exercise response and recovery plans during non-disaster times.

In 2014, HCOHSEM produced more than 100 mapping products for emergency activations, special events and emergency management partners.

Texas City Y response, March 24, 2014. Courtesy of USCG.
LOGISTICS

Logistics staff provides communications training.
HCOHSEM’s Logistics Section provides Harris County stakeholders and emergency managers with resource coordination and support in both day-to-day operations, as well as in times of emergency.

Logistics maintains and updates applicable plans and participates in exercises and training activities. It also maintains facilities and infrastructure for emergency operations, by ensuring that equipment, supplies, materials and services are readily available.

In 2014, the logistics team accomplished the following:

- Staff attained national credentials for teaching Communications Unit Leader, Communications Technician and Auxiliary Communications courses from the DHS Office of Emergency Communications. This allows Logistics to assist in interoperability training and teaching at all levels of government.

- Enhanced communications abilities by installing systems that help in the exchange of information with agencies such as the FBI, USCG, Texas Division of Emergency Management and the American Red Cross.

- Trained more than 100 volunteers in the logistics process and on the software used to support Harris County during times of emergencies.

- Tested and trained with Point of Distribution support staff to ensure continuity of operations within the county.

- Enhanced Military Auxiliary Radio Systems to become Department of Defense compliant; allowing for direct communications to networks with official national security or emergency preparedness events.

- Developed training and operational procedures for the new EOC.

HCOHSEM constantly works to develop new internal systems that further improve emergency operations. This year it created a Dynamic Incident Mapping System to provide the EOC staff and on-call personnel with interactive, incident based mapping capabilities that offer a near real-time visual.
TRAINING & EXERCISES

Harris County Department Head Hurricane Workshop, August 10, 2014.

- Identify and correct any false information disseminated during the event (media, reporting parties, etc.)
- Establish and implement fueling plan
- Conduct damage assessment of UD/MUD/PUDs and identify needs
- Start recovery/restore process of data to IT systems accessible to incident command and the remainder of county departments/divisions

Hurricane Timeline: R+
Last year, HCOHSEM’s training and exercise program focused on the capabilities of operational communications, coordination and mass care.

In addition, HCOHSEM participates, promotes and provides numerous training opportunities for partners to help in the continual development of essential emergency management skills and to introduce new technology. Such trainings includes ongoing courses in the National Incident Management System, as well as continuity of operations, joint information centers, public safety leadership and various communications courses.

In 2014, HCOHSEM hosted 19 exercises and participated in more than 30 partner exercises throughout the region including the following:

**OPERATION COUNTY STAGING AREA FULL-SCALE EXERCISE**

HCOHSEM and Harris County Community Services hosted a two-day full-scale exercise at the NRG Center. The Operation County Staging Area (CSA) Full-Scale exercise was developed to establish a learning environment for players to exercise emergency response plans, policies and procedures as they pertain to the recovery phase following a hurricane, with particular focus on the processes and technology in the CSA. This exercise was built upon lessons learned from the County’s 2012 Hurricane Alexis exercise, as well as a series of communications and planning trainings and tabletop exercises held during the past two years.

**VOLUNTEER RECEPTION CENTER DRILL**

Lessons learned during the Hurricane Katrina Shelter Operations event of 2005 led Harris County to create a solid volunteer plan and continue to build up its cadre of volunteers, particularly within the Citizen Corps programs. Part of the planning includes the establishment of a Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) to serve as a hub for those unaffiliated, spontaneous volunteers wishing to assist following an event. The drill, led by Volunteer Houston, brought together members of the Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters to test out the current Volunteer Reception Center Plan by cycling participants through the VRC.

**HARRIS COUNTY DEPARTMENT HEAD HURRICANE WORKSHOP**

Managers from 27 county departments attended the Harris County Department Head Hurricane Workshop to review the county’s hurricane plan, including response and recovery timelines. The last hurricane to impact the region was Ike in 2008. Since then, the plan has been improved and tested. The workshop also allowed participants an opportunity to discuss the plan and address any unmet needs and concerns.

Other notable partner exercises included:
- Southeast Texas Regional Advisory Council (SETRAC) – Operation Whirlwind
- Harris County Sheriff’s Office Hurricane Tabletop
- Metro Interoperability Tabletop Exercise
- Functional and Access Needs Seminar
- University of Houston-Downtown/FEMA Cyber Security Virtual Tabletop Exercise
- Texas Medical Center Weapons of Mass Destruction Tabletop Exercise
- Various LEPC and industrial exercises
PREPAREDNESS

University of St. Thomas CERT final exercise, March 7, 2014.

Fire suppression demonstration at 8th Annual CERT Rodeo, February 8, 2014.
HCOHSEM works with the Harris County Citizen Corps to build resilient communities through education, training and volunteer service. This makes communities safer, stronger and better prepared to respond to the threats of terrorism, crime, public health issues and disasters of all kinds.

HARRIS COUNTY CITIZEN CORPS

Each year, the Harris County Citizen Corps creates opportunities for local residents to volunteer and help their communities prepare for and respond to emergencies.

With a database of more than 80,000 volunteers contributing millions of training and service hours in the past 12 years, the Harris County Citizen Corps membership includes 22,797 trained volunteers involved in 251 Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT); 21,537 volunteers from 24 Volunteer in Police Service agencies; 4,089 volunteers from the Medical Reserve Corps; 5,925 volunteers from the 351 neighborhoods participating in the USA on Watch program; and 24 Fire Corps agencies. With more than 10.5 million hits since its launch, its website www.harriscountycitizencorps.com is a trusted source for preparedness information and training opportunities.

Harris County Citizen Corps news and updates are also available on Facebook.

CERT MEMBERSHIP REACHES 20,000

The Harris County Citizen Corps CERT program reached a milestone of 20,000 trained members in 2014. This was made possible with the graduation of a team of students from the University of St. Thomas (UST), members of the Health Occupations Students of America.

The UST team, comprised of more than 50 members, completed an extensive eight-week emergency preparedness course taught by first-responders. The training makes them proficient in safety basics they can use in their homes, schools, workplace and communities.

The CERT program’s success is due in large part to its growing partnerships with first responders, non-profit agencies, community organizations and all its volunteers.

CERT RODEO ROUNDUP

This year, CERT members from the deaf and hard-of-hearing community participated in their first rodeo. No horses or cattle were involved at the Harris County Citizen Corps 2014 CERT Rodeo Roundup, just a day of skill demonstrations in emergency response.

The Harris County Citizen Corps, in partnership with HCOHSEM, the City of Houston and the Houston Center for Independent Living have been collaborating to provide training for deaf and hard-of-hearing communities. Deaf CERT training began in 2009. In September 2012, Harris County Citizen Corps introduced the first CERT Basic Training Course led by a deaf instructor.

Held at the Harris County Fire & Sheriff’s Training Academy, the 8th Annual CERT Rodeo Roundup was a complete success. CERT teams from around the state gathered to test their skills in basic medical operations, search and rescue, fire suppression, incident command, emergency preparedness and hazmat recognition. More than 500 volunteers participated at this year’s event.
The Big Move, NASA's Boeing 747 moved to Space Center Houston, April 28, 2014.
HCOHSEM uses traditional public information tools, social media and news outlets to gather and share information before, during and after an emergency. The communications staff works closely with emergency management and media partners year-round to keep Harris County residents informed.

HCOHSEM also provides support to emergency management partners that request assistance.

**TEXAS CITY Y OIL SPILL**

HCOHSEM deployed staff to assist in the Joint Information Center set up by the USCG Sector Houston-Galveston Public Affairs unit handling the Texas City Y oil spill response. Public information officers from various government agencies assisted with media calls, interviews, writing assignments and other duties.

This was the largest Texas oil spill in two decades. It occurred at a dangerous intersection known as the Texas City Y, where three lanes of traffic converge: vessels from the Port of Texas City, the Houston Ship Channel and the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway. No injuries were reported, but the spilled oil coated the shoreline of the southern end of Galveston Bay and flowed into the Gulf of Mexico. The accident also snarled traffic for five days on the Houston Ship Channel, which serves the nation’s largest petrochemical complex.

**THE BIG MOVE**

HCOHSEM’s public information office also assisted with The Big Move, an event created to transport the Boeing 747 Shuttle Carrier Aircraft (SCA) that once ferried NASA’s shuttle fleet around the country from Ellington Field to Space Center Houston.

Space Center Houston partnered with 30 public, private and government agencies to move the SCA. It was moved in large pieces in a convoy traveling at only 3 mph over the course of two nights. Crews had to close roads, dismantle traffic lights, signs and utility poles to make the trip.

Texas City Y Unified Command, March 25, 2014.
EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION PLANNER

In 2014, HCOHSEM added an Emergency Public Information Planner to its staff in order to address the integration of communication technologies into a cohesive public communications plan. To date, more than 25 plans and standard operating guideline documents have been created. These range from operating instructions for various communications software to plans that detail the overall concept of operations.

SOCIAL MEDIA

HCOHSEM effectively uses social media to communicate with Harris County residents. All public safety information that HCOHSEM posts on its website www.readyharris.org is also posted on Facebook and Twitter. Social media posts surpassed 700 in 2014.

NEWS & PUBLICATIONS

Communication is critical in a disaster. Therefore, establishing solid relationships with the media is necessary. HCOHSEM understands that media coverage can save lives in a disaster and that is why it works closely with media partners to deliver the latest and most accurate information. Last year, HCOHSEM handled 650 media inquiries and interviews with local, state, national and international media.
**INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

Since 2009, HCOHSEM’s internship program has successfully offered college students the opportunity to learn and gain hands-on experience in the field of emergency management. The year-round program is designed to strengthen fundamental emergency management concepts and communication skills that prepare interns for future employment opportunities. To date, the internship program has hosted 45 students.

**VETERANS INTEGRATION PROGRAM**

Military veterans who leave the armed services because of injuries sometimes face challenges transitioning into the community and civilian workforce. In an effort to aid these service men and women, HCOHSEM has established a partnership with the Veterans Affairs Hospital to offer internship opportunities for former military personnel.

The Veterans Integration Program is a twelve-week internship that offers transitioning military men and women the opportunity to build upon their existing leadership and emergency management skills. Most importantly, the internship functions as a bridge between military and civilian life. It offers veterans a way to reintegrate into the community and develop a skill set they can take with them to whatever their future endeavors may be.

Former interns now work in HCOHSEM’s Planning and Logistics Sections.
PUBLIC EDUCATION

Despite the quiet 2014 hurricane season, HCOHSEM continues to strive in promoting personal preparedness through a highly active public outreach program. 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.

EVENTS & PRESENTATIONS

In 2014, HCOHSEM took part in more than 150 outreach events and presentations. Among these are the National Weather Service 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.

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE HURRICANE WORKSHOP

More than 4,000 area residents attended the 2014 National Weather Service Hurricane Workshop, the largest and best attended hurricane preparedness event in the nation. This annual event provides attendees an opportunity to learn about hurricanes and get information on how to prepare. Elected officials, local emergency managers, expert meteorologists and dozens of exhibitors participate in this event that coincides with the start of hurricane season.

NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH

Every year, Harris County Commissioners Court recognizes September as National Preparedness Month (NPM), and HCOHSEM increases its outreach efforts to promote preparedness in our region. In 2014, HCOHSEM participated in numerous outreach events during NPM, distributed thousands of preparedness items and publications, and heavily promoted emergency preparedness on its website www.readyharris.org and through Facebook and Twitter.

INDUSTRY

Continuing its collaboration with industry partners, HCOHSEM worked with companies such as Chevron, Cobalt, Phillips 66, Shell and Technip during their safety meetings and conducted more than 25 preparedness presentations.

EOC TOURS

In 2014, close to 900 visitors toured the Harris County EOC and Houston TranStar, including more than 100 dignitaries from Australia, China, Dubai, Ghana, Thailand and Turkey. Tours can be requested online at www.readyharris.org.
LESSON LEARNED

Infrastructure Systems: Developing a Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources (CIKR) Plan

SUMMARY
Identifying CIKR is intended to support collaborative planning efforts and provide necessary information for steady-state risk management and to support incident management during response/recovery efforts. Critical infrastructure is defined as the physical or virtual assets, systems, networks, and functions so vital that their disruption would have a debilitating impact on security, the economy, public health and safety, or any combination of those matters. Key resources are publicly or privately controlled resources essential to operation of the economy and the government. Previous disasters have proven that not having a structured CIKR plan can have a negative impact on response and recovery time. The creation of a CIKR plan ensures local emergency management has an understanding of the critical infrastructure and key resources, in order to make multi-disciplinary, multi-resource, and multi-tiered informed decisions regarding preparedness, incident response and recovery.

DESCRIPTION
After such incidents as Tropical Storm Allison, 9/11, Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Ike and numerous other natural disasters, the Harris County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management recognized the need to have a local CIKR plan in place. Having a CIKR plan ensures that local partners understand the infrastructure dependencies, interdependencies, and associated cascading effects within the community and the local, state and national cross-sector impact to CIKR. It also assures emergency management can rapidly identify, assess and efficiently allocate resources that will sustain the community and enhance response and recovery efforts.

There are essential steps to identifying and protecting critical infrastructure, which may include; conducting risk assessments and prioritizing assets, understanding the interdependencies of key infrastructure, analyzing cross-sector cascading effects, and coordinating with private and public sectors to improve protection and resiliency. To implement this plan, Harris County categorized infrastructure into five levels. A Level 5 asset is identified as something that is critical to the local county/city. A Level 4 asset is

HARRIS COUNTY OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

DHS Innovative Practice for developing a Critical Infrastructure and Key Resource Plan.
Over the years, HCOHSEM has worked hard to develop and implement innovative tools, programs, and resources, which help make Harris County better prepared and more resilient. HCOHSEM best practices have been recognized by DHS, FEMA and the Emergency Managers Association of Texas (EMAT), among others. Efforts to improve evacuation, communications and resource planning are now models for cities throughout the nation.

Previous awards and recognitions include:

- 2014 DHS Innovative Practice: Infrastructure Systems: Developing a Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources (CIKR) Plan
- 2013 DHS Innovative Practice: Regional Joint Information Center Exercise: Disaster Communication on a Regional Scale
- 2013 FEMA Individual and Community Preparedness Award - National Citizen Corps Honorable Mention for Outstanding Community Emergency Response Team Initiatives
- 2013 Emergency Management Association of Texas Excellence in Emergency Management Award
- 2012 FEMA uses HCOHSEM’s Tweets in Social Media Training Course IS-042
- 2011 Jack Colley Citizen Corps Leadership Award
- 2011 FEMA Innovative Practice: Emergency Public Information: HCOHSEM’s Implementation of a Social Media Protocol
- 2010 Honorable Mention: National Citizen Corps Achievement Awards – Celebrating Resilient Communities
- 2010 FEMA Innovative Practice: Interactive Hurricane Evacuation Map
- 2009 DHS Lesson Learned: Joint Information Centers: Increasing Personnel to Operate a Phone Bank after an Incident
- 2009 FEMA Innovative Practice: Mass Evacuation: HCOHSEM’s Zip Code Based Evacuation Plan
- 2009 National Citizen Corps Council Achievement Award for Volunteer Integration
- 2008 Honored by President George W. Bush at the White House
- 2007 President’s Call to Service
- 2006 Governor’s Volunteer Award for Community Capacity Builder
- 2003 Best Practices Innovation Award from the Texas Association of Counties