Reference Document No. 1

Overview of Key Administrative Functions within the Texas Emergency Management System

4/17/2023

NOTE: There is a distinction in the use of the terms *event* and *disaster* in the context of Texas emergency management. The term *event* is used to describe an administrative action such as a mobilization period as defined by declarations from the Governor. The event will have start and end dates which will be the same dates used for federal FEMA assistance. The term *disaster* will be used to describe a physical hazard or phenomena, or pre-conditions that have occurred, or are expected to occur that require some level of preparatory action.

Texas Emergency Management -- Key Concepts

**TDEM Purpose**

Appointed by the Texas legislature, TDEM ensures state and local governments respond to and recover from emergencies and disasters and implement plans and programs to help prevent or mitigate the impact of emergencies and disasters. TDEM is responsible for the day-to-day management and coordination of statewide emergency management activities, operating the state operations center (SOC) and coordinating statewide resources during disaster response and recovery operations.

The TDEM mission implements a comprehensive all-hazard emergency management program for the State and for assisting cities, counties, and state agencies in planning and implementing their emergency management programs. This wide-ranging emergency management program includes disaster mitigation of known hazards before and after events to reduce their impact. This includes preparedness activities, such as emergency planning, training, and exercises, in addition to provisions for effective response to emergency situations, and recovery programs for major disasters. Chapter 418 of the Texas Government Code lays out an extensive set of specific responsibilities assigned to the Division.

**Declarations of Emergency, Major Disaster, Fire Management Assistance**

The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207 (the Stafford Act) §401 states in part that: “All requests for a declaration by the President that a major disaster exists shall be made by the Governor of the affected State.” Staging of state-wide or high value datasets and collections *prior* to disasters occurring provides a way to test the workflows and features of the architecture as well as a way to inform on best practices for storage of similar, but event specific data.

**Pre-Event and Emergency Declarations – State and Federal**

Existing conditions often dictate the strength and breadth of a disaster's impacts well before any anticipated effects. These conditions may lead to an administrative creation of what is termed an *event*. The Texas Governor may request an emergency declaration in expectation of an impending event that is likely to result in a major disaster. Pre-disaster requests are required to meet all statutory and regulatory requirements for an emergency declaration request. Requests must demonstrate an immediate need for emergency protective measures prior to impact which are beyond the available resources or the capability of the State of Texas. The request must identify specific unmet emergency needs that can be fulfilled through Direct Federal Assistance (DFA). Such DFA may include personnel, equipment, supplies, evacuation assistance, and additional support.

When an emergency exists where the primary responsibility rests with the Federal government, the President may declare an emergency without a request from the Texas Governor. Such an emergency declaration does not prevent the Governor from also requesting a major disaster declaration for additional unmet needs caused by the event  [1].

**Major Disaster Declarations**

Events begin and end locally and are managed on a daily basis at the nearest possible geographical, organizational, and jurisdictional level [2], however the President can declare a major disaster for any natural event. Events include any hurricane, tornado, storm, high water, wind-driven water, tidal wave, tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption, landslide, mudslide, snowstorm, or drought, or, regardless of cause, fire, flood, or explosion, that the President determines has caused damage of such severity that it is beyond the shared resources and capabilities of state and local governments to respond.

**Local/Regional Response**

Assistant Chiefs (ACs) and District Coordinators (DCs) are TDEM employees who serve as local emergency management liaisons. They also have operational authority to assign state disaster regions, disaster districts and Regional Emergency Operations Centers (REOCs). ACs and DCs work directly with local government officials, volunteer groups and private sector partners. DCs also assist the Disaster District Emergency Management Council- Representatives (DDEMC-R) in maintaining DDEOC operations.

Mayors and county judges serve as emergency management directors and are authorized by the Texas Disaster Act to declare a local disaster when conditions exist or when there is an immediate threat [3]. According to Tex. Gov. Code Ch. 418, a declaration of local disaster may not be continued or renewed for a period of more than seven days except with the consent of the governing body of the political subdivision.

**State Response**

If local resources and mutual aid are insufficient to respond to and manage the incident, local jurisdictions may request state assistance. TDEM developed the State of Texas Assistance Request (S.T.A.R.) tool that captures requests for assistance from various entities, such as state agencies, city or county offices of emergency management, cities or counties, and non-governmental organizations [4]. This tool is a resource request and fulfillment process that entities can use in all phases of emergency management to requisition critical resources from the State Operation Center (SOC). A pocket guide was prepared and distributed by the Texas WebEOC Interoperability Project (TWIRP) to assist requesters and users of the S.T.A.R. tool [5]. Texas counties are grouped into six emergency management regions (Figure 1) [6], and each region has a TDEM Assistant Chief Responsible for emergency Management in their region. Within these six regions are 24 disaster districts. Each disaster district has one or more TDEM District Coordinators who also serve as commanders at the Texas Department of Public Safety. TDEM Assistant Chiefs oversee the emergency management team in their regions (Figure 2) [7].

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|  | A picture containing map, text, atlas, diagram  Description automatically generated  Figure 1.  Texas Emergency Management Regions [TDEM 2023]  A picture containing map, diagram, text, atlas  Description automatically generated |

Figure 2.  Texas Disaster District Map [UT 2023]

**Federal Response**

If an event is beyond local and state capabilities, the Governor can request federal assistance. The governor’s request is made through the FEMA Regional Administrator and based on a finding that the disaster is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the state and affected local governments, then federal assistance is granted [8].

Related Resources

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