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# Researchers predict active hurricane season

**FROM THIS SIDE**

Although we'd already had two named storms in the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico by June 1, that date actually marked the beginning of the official hurricane season here in the U.S. The weather experts are likely correct, and we can expect a more active than average hurricane season (see page 10). DSHS staff has spent a boatload of hours updating its plan and participating in exercises that demonstrate how the state will respond in the event of a hurricane on the Texas coast. More specifically, EMS/trauma systems staff has been tasked with developing plans for evacuations of state facilities, like UTMB, and coordinating requests for medically-supervised transportation when local resources are exhausted. This involves not only identifying what assets are available to evacuate state facilities and to perform other missions, but also how we will help coordinate the action from Austin.



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The process works like this: when a request for resources is sent in from a local Disaster Coordination Council (DDC) to the State Operations Center (SOC), staff there will determine where the request goes. If it's a request for anything related to health and medical services, SOC staff sends it to the DSHS Multi-Agency Coordinating Center (MACC), located at the main campus in Austin. The MACC is an emergency operations center serving as a central point of coordination for all of the state Health and Human Services Commission's agencies' response. If the request pertains to our mission in EMS/trauma systems, MACC staff sends it to us, where we have developed a system to track ambulance requests and resources. To put it another way, the SOC and MACC will process requests from local entities, and if they relate to EMS or trauma systems, the staff in EMS/trauma systems will make sure the rubber hits the road.

We still need more providers to help with our state evacuations and state missions. Signing a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) ensures that you will receive payment promptly from DSHS, instead of waiting on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to pay. DSHS will then seek reimbursement from FEMA. We currently have about 161 EMS ground providers and three air providers who have committed to both facility evacuations and/or state missions. For MOA information, please go to [www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/moalist.shtm](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/moalist.shtm).

As you may know, the Governor's EMS and Trauma Advisory Council (GETAC) is an active partner with DSHS as we prepare for disaster situations. The Disaster/Emergency Preparedness Task Force has developed a list of recommendations to DSHS intended to improve the response of EMS and hospitals during a disaster. The task force has met monthly since August of 2006 and presented its recommendations to GETAC at the May meeting. GETAC passed a motion to endorse the document and, at the same time, recognized that the recommendations could be amended if necessary. We greatly appreciate the dedication of the multi-disciplinary task force and the enormous amount of time and thoughtfulness that went into putting together the recommendations. You can find the most recent document on our website at [www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/GETACMay2007Documents.shtm](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems/GETACMay2007Documents.shtm).

GETAC approved moving several rules forward at its last meeting. In the rules package sent to the DSHS Council for the July meeting are 157.39, the Comprehensive Clinical Management Program rule. Many people across the state, including a GETAC

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strike force, worked extremely hard on this project, and we are very grateful to all for their outstanding work. We think this program will ultimately improve patient care in Texas.

The next GETAC meeting will be in Austin at the Hilton Austin Airport on August 24. Committee meetings will take place on August 22-23. The November meeting will take place during the conference at the Hilton Americas, next to the George R. Brown Convention Center, on November 19. Committee meetings will take place the two preceding days at the same hotel.

We think you'll like the set-up this year: the Hilton is connected to the convention center by a couple of skywalks. We could only get a limited number of rooms at the hotel at the conference rate, so make your reservations soon if you'd like to stay there. The other hotels are within easy walking distance of the center. Turn to page 12. We've added a few more hotels in recent weeks.

Here's hoping for sunny skies and a calm Gulf wind...for as long as possible.