

Ready for action

Hurricane Dean's threat fizzled, but practice improved process

It seems like a long time ago now that we were worried about Hurricane Dean slamming into the Texas coast. But on Wednesday, August 15, at 4:43 p.m., DSHS folks received an e-mail from the Governor's Division of Emergency Management: the Category 4 storm was set to take aim at Texas in just 10 days. As it turned out, the storm stayed on a westward course, hitting Mexico. What had been the threat of a large hurricane for Texas turned into a large disaster drill. That was good; we could not have simulated anything that would have tested our system so thoroughly. All in all, the system worked fairly well. There are a few processes that need work, a few lines of command that need clarifying. DSHS is still seeking EMS providers and personnel to sign the response MOAs (www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems or write Phil Lockwood at phil.lockwood@dshs.state.tx.us). We will continue to work with organizations across the state to make sure the next time a hurricane threatens our shores we'll be ready.

Here's the response, by the numbers:

DSHS/MOA ground ambulances sent deployment letters: 56
DSHS/MOA ground ambulances sent deployment letters that responded/checked-in: San Antonio ARCC-RMOC: 28
DSHS/MOA rotor wing ambulances sent deployment letters: None
FEMA/AMR ground ambulances



Willie Mendez and Stephanie Alonzo keep an eye on the hurricane as they staff the Alamo Regional Command Center (ARCC). ARCC and Southwest Texas Regional Advisory Council (STRAC) helped manage the state and federal EMS assets staged in San Antonio. ARCC and STRAC were instrumental in organizing and setting up the check-in location and providing logistical support.

that responded/checked-in to San Antonio ARCC-RMOC: 277
FEMA/AMR rotor wing ambulances that responded/checked-in to San Antonio ARCC-RMOC: 12
FEMA/AMR fixed wing ambulances that responded/checked-in to San Antonio ARCC-RMOC: 13



DSHS worked with the Alamo Regional Command Center (ARCC) and Southwest Texas Regional Advisory County (STRAC) to manage the state and federal EMS assets staged in San Antonio. ARCC and STRAC were instrumental in organizing and setting up the check-in location and providing logistical support.



DSHS EMS/trauma systems staff went on a 24/7 schedule to deploy and track any DSHS MOA ambulances; to deploy, track and demobilize any strike team leaders; and to coordinate EMS assets. Brett Hart, pictured in the baseball hat, was incident commander for the day shift while Maxie Bishop headed the operation at night. EMS Exchange staff worked closely with Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC), an interagency EOC established by DSHS. The staff at the MACC coordinate health and medical response, including the coordination of communications with impacted Health and Human Services Commission and DSHS regional offices.



The Alamo Regional Command Center (ARCC) had about 135 people from federal, state and local governments and private agencies, working together to marshal resources. ARCC worked closely with the Governor's Division of Emergency Management (GDEM), the state agency within the Governor's Office responsible for emergency planning, training, public education and information, hazard mitigation, response and disaster recovery. GDEM runs the State Operations Center (SOC).



San Antonio was chosen as a staging area for EMS resources because of its reasonably central location well away from possible hurricane landfall. Ambulances, both off the federal FEMA contract and the DSHS MOA, arrived by the dozens at Kelly Air Force Base. There, staff from DSHS and other agencies, including the Southwest Texas Regional Advisory Council (STRAC) helped manage the state and federal assets and coordinate.

DSHS EMS resources

Total number of DSHS/MOA ground ambulances: 192
 Total number of DSHS/MOA rotor wing ambulances: 6
 Total number of DSHS/MOA fixed wing ambulances: None

DSHS/MOA State Missions only ground ambulances: 91

BLS: 29
 ALS: 14
 MICU: 48

DSHS/MOA State Missions only rotor wing ambulances: 3

DSHS/MOA State Facility Evacuation only ground

ambulances: 1

BLS:

ALS: 1

MICU:

DSHS/MOA combined State Missions/Facility

Evacuation ground ambulances:

101

BLS: 35

ALS: 16

MICU: 50

DSHS/MOA combined State

Missions/Facility Evacuation rotor

wing ambulances: 3