

Disaster Readiness and Recovery for Texas

Program Description

Past disasters such as Hurricane Harvey and wildland fires in West Texas exposed that many Texas counties were strained by the complexities of disaster preparedness, response and long-term recovery.

Better preparation and support from disaster-recovery experts can help fast-track recovery and alleviate long-term costs for communities. With that in mind, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service received funding from the 86th Texas Legislature to build a disaster assessment and recovery program to enhance disaster readiness in Texas.

AgriLife Extension will establish six regional teams of Extension professionals to provide support for local communities to prepare for, respond to, recover from and become more resilient to all types of disasters. The new Extension unit will help the agency respond more efficiently to emergencies while continuing to provide its educational programs on critical issues statewide.

Demonstrated Community Need Proven Ability to Help

AgriLife Extension is uniquely positioned to provide this assistance due to its statewide network of educators, volunteers, and offices serving all 254 Texas counties. The agency can rapidly deploy specialized professionals to the disaster impact zone and, as a member of the Texas Emergency Management Council, continue its support of lead state agencies during such operations.

The agency has a demonstrated history of responding to the needs of Texas communities affected by floods, wildfires, tornadoes and hurricanes. With the magnitude of Hurricane Harvey and the subsequent creation of the Governor's Commission to Rebuild Texas, AgriLife Extension assumed a new, larger role in emergency response and recovery.

Objectives

Prepare counties for natural disasters and disaster recovery.

Help local officials, agencies and organizations navigate the complex process of preparing for and recovering from disasters.



AgriLife Extension helps Texas communities prepare for disasters like Hurricane Harvey and provide expert support in disaster recovery.

Emergency Preparedness

Help communities plan for risk reduction

AgriLife Extension teams help communities prepare long-term plans for land use, natural resources, and mitigation to reduce the impacts of disasters.

Support community health

Assisting individuals, families, businesses, and agricultural producers in disaster response and recovery enhances a rural community's return to a healthy state and makes Texas' food supply more secure.

Teach mitigation and recovery

For elected officials, planners and the public, Extension personnel teach workshops on disaster preparedness, stormwater management, risk mitigation, federal reimbursement, sheltering people and animals, personal evacuation procedures, post-storm home safety and debris removal, and temporary housing, among other topics.

Collaborate with other agencies

AgriLife Extension works with agencies and organizations across the state in both education and response. Partnerships such as these bring communities together during the toughest and most stressful times. The Disaster Assessment and Recovery team (DART) helps foster relationships during non-emergency times, thus, when the need for response occurs, networks are in place.

Emergency Response and Recovery

Operate shelters

AgriLife Extension teams establish and manage points for animal supply and sheltering to support animal recovery operations.

Assess damage

DARTs assess agricultural losses and infrastructure damages for reporting to local, state and federal partners.

Teach recovery workshops

Extension agents host recovery forums and workshops in coordination with state and federal agencies.

Conduct Mental Health First Aid trainings

Disasters can cause severe mental and emotional distress. Through Mental Health First Aid trainings, AgriLife Extension offers initial support and assistance by teaching community members how to recognize signs and symptoms of a crisis or developing mental health condition. The program also reduces the stigma related to mental health, which can be a barrier to seeking help after a traumatic event.

Act as liaisons

Extension agents maintain daily contact with local school, municipal, and county officials to help convey information to and from state and federal agencies.

Provide expert help

DARTs serve as a "surge force" of personnel that can deploy into the disaster theater and, among other tasks,

- ▶ help establish Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) disaster recovery centers and USDA Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program distribution locations,
- ▶ support debris removal and inspect temporary housing locations,
- ▶ liaise between locations, and incident command posts,
- ▶ support preliminary damage assessments,
- ▶ assist with TDEM hazard mitigation grant applications, and
- ▶ assist with FEMA reimbursement filings.



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Jeff Hyde, Ph.D., Director

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
600 John Kimbrough Blvd., Suite 509, 7101 TAMU
Phone: 979.862.3932 **Email:** jeff.hyde@ag.tamu.edu
AgriLifeExtension.tamu.edu

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Texas A&M AgriLife

What is AgriLife? It's a simple word for a diverse organization. With teaching, research, extension education, laboratory, and forestry facilities throughout Texas, we serve people of all ages and backgrounds. Led by Patrick J. Stover, vice chancellor of Texas A&M AgriLife, dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and director of Texas A&M AgriLife Research, Texas A&M AgriLife includes the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas A&M AgriLife Research, Texas A&M Forest Service, and the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory.