

Improving Community Resiliency Through DISASTER ASSESSMENT & RECOVERY

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Challenges

- 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 and recovery in Texas.

AgriLife Extension Response

With the magnitude of Hurricane Harvey and the subsequent creation of the Governor's Commission to Rebuild Texas, the AgriLife Extension Service assumed a new, larger role in emergency response and recovery in support of the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM).

- AgriLife Extension has established six regional Disaster Assistance Response Teams (DART) to provide support for local communities to prepare for, respond to, recover from and become more resilient to all types of disasters.
- Works with agencies and organizations across the state in both education and response to help communities prepare long-term plans for land use, natural resources, and mitigation to reduce the impacts of disasters.
- For elected officials, planners and the public, AgriLife 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.
- Establishes and manages points of supply for animal shelters, assesses losses from damage, co-hosts recovery workshops with state and federal agencies, and conducts mental health first aid trainings.
- Since 2020, more than 200 AgriLife Extension agents and specialists have played integral roles in supporting statewide COVID-19 relief efforts.

Economic Impacts

- AgriLife Extension agents delivered more than 1 million COVID-19 vaccines to medical facilities, correctional facilities, and regional staging areas for further distribution. These vaccines are estimated to have resulted in 6,500 fewer hospitalizations and **\$75 million** in reduced hospitalization costs.
- Supported and delivered **3.57 million** COVID-19 test kits to school districts, nursing homes, city and county governments, chambers of commerce, universities, and youth summer camps; including employees at 18 food processing facilities with the goal of avoiding a COVID-19-related shutdown that would have placed more pressure on an already stressed food supply chain.
- Assisted with conducting 71,500 COVID-19 tests at the Texas State Capital and other venues by request, and delivered 105,000 vaccination records to the TDEM.
- Delivered 8,700 COVID-19 test kits and PPE to high-risk individuals at long-term care facilities, nursing homes, and medical offices; 44,000 cases of PPE and cleaning supplies to various other destinations, and 2,200 doses of therapeutic drugs to medical facilities.
- Developed on-line CARES Act education and training program targeting local government, agricultural producers, and school districts in all 254 Texas counties.
- Developed and delivered **343,982 online courses** focusing on COVID-19-related child care issues to 200,000 child care providers.
- Following Hurricane Laura's landfall (2020), AgriLife Extension deployed Strike Teams to support the TDEM in assessing damages, and extension agents to support the Texas A&M Veterinary Emergency Team and Texas Animal Health Commission with animal sheltering and supply point operations.

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