

Improving Community Resiliency Through DISASTER ASSESSMENT & RECOVERY



Challenges

- Past disasters such as Hurricane Harvey and wildland fires in 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, expedite flow of resources 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 (DAR) program to amplify the Extension Agent Network. The 88th Texas Legislature provided additional funding to expand the program by placing DAR field positions in strategically important locations across Texas to better align with regional councils of governments (COG).



Contact

Office of the Director
Texas A&M AgriLife
Extension Service
(979) 314-8200
extension@ag.tamu.edu

AgriLife Extension Response

Through its DAR unit, AgriLife Extension responds to the needs of Texas communities affected by natural and man-made disasters and provides resources for disaster mitigation and preparedness. DAR field personnel work with agencies and organizations across the COG regions and state to help communities prepare long-term plans for land use, natural resources, and mitigation to reduce the impacts of disasters. In 2024, DAR Field Specialists:

- Managed Animal Supply Points during the Panhandle wildfire event and San Jacinto County flooding and received donations and distributed supplies valued at **\$5.7 million**.
- Served in response and recovery roles at the State Operations Center and Incident Support Teams during activations associated with the January winter storm, the solar eclipse, Hurricane Beryl, and Tropical Storms Alberto and Francine.
- Provided logistical support to the Texas A&M Veterinary Emergency Team for an Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) Request to North Carolina.
- Conducted 399 educational and planning events, reaching **138,328** educational contacts across the state and conducted Mental Health First Aid course with 14,395 educational hours in 2024.
- With the funding provided by the Texas Legislature, the DAR unit has been able to leverage state resources by securing external grants and funding commitments totaling \$29.7 million during the past two years to enhance and expand efforts to rebuild communities impacted by natural disasters, address health disparities across communities, and develop software planning applications (CHARM) to better prescribe mitigation plans based on floodwater flow patterns and locations.

Economic Impacts

- Engaged 80 volunteers and interns in stormwater wetland project sites to plant 2,400 proper wetland plants in 36 communities, protecting 16,000 homes and businesses in the Clear Lake area.
- Provided support to TDEM, the Texas Animal Health Commission and the USDA in response to the Avian Influenza outbreak in Texas Dairies.
- Research shows that for every dollar invested in natural hazard mitigation strategies, economic benefits range from \$3 to \$7, depending on the type of peril.
- DAR specialists successfully deployed to the Panhandle wildfires in Hutchinson, Gray, Roberts, and Carson Counties, distributing commodities valued at **\$5.7 million**.
- Completed preliminary flood and storm damage assessments in nineteen counties in North, Central and East Texas during multiple severe weather events during the month of May.



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2025

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