

Improving Community Resiliency Through DISASTER ASSESSMENT & RECOVERY



Challenges

- Past disasters such as Hurricane Harvey and major wildland fires have shown that many Texas counties are strained by the complexity of disaster preparedness, response, and long-term recovery.
- Better preparation and support from disaster recovery experts can help accelerate recovery, improve the flow of resources, and reduce long-term costs for communities.

With this need in mind, the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service received funding from the 86th Texas Legislature to establish 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).

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 2025, DAR Field Specialists:

- Deployed 14 personnel to conduct flood damage assessments in the Rio Grande Valley and provide Incident Management Team support. Additionally, 21 County Extension Agents managed seven Disaster Recovery Centers for 44 days following an event that caused more than \$100 million in damages.
- Provided logistical support to the Texas A&M Veterinary Emergency Team during the July 4 Hill Country and West Central Texas flood response.
- Responded to a national Emergency Management Assistance Compact request from North Carolina following Hurricane Helene, deploying three DAR Specialists for an 18-day assignment to support the Texas A&M Veterinary Emergency Team.
- Participated in 16 state- and FEMA-led Disaster Recovery Centers, delivering recovery resources to more than 2,225 affected individuals.
- Led the Green Infrastructure for Texas (GIFT) Wetland Team, transforming a 200-acre golf course into a flood mitigation wetland and a community nature park. The project included growing and planting more than 4,000 plants in 2024-2025, providing flood protection for approximately 10,000 homes and businesses.

Economic Impacts

- Managed an Animal Supply Point during the Crabapple wildfire and Hill Country flooding events, receiving and distributing donated supplies valued at more than \$100,000.
- Deployed 84 DAR Specialists and County Extension Agents during the July 4 flood event to conduct damage assessments, manage staging areas, and operate Disaster Recovery Centers.
- Reached more than 240 city and county officials from 23 Texas communities through the Community Hazards and Resource Management (CHARM) team, delivering hands-on mapping exercises to support future land use planning, hazard assessments, and local priority setting.
- Developed more than 23 spatial, data-driven community models that translate complex risk, development, and vulnerability indicators into interactive tools to support local decision-making.
- Supported disaster response operations through GIS mapping, carcass disposal coordination, and logistics management, including organizing and distributing more than \$55,000 in donated fencing and feed supplies.
- Advanced cost-effective disaster mitigation strategies grounded in research shows that every dollar invested in natural hazard mitigation yields an estimated \$3 to \$7 in economic benefits, depending on the type of hazard.

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