

City of Austin
Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management



2020

Annual Report



PREPAREDNESS

RESPONSE

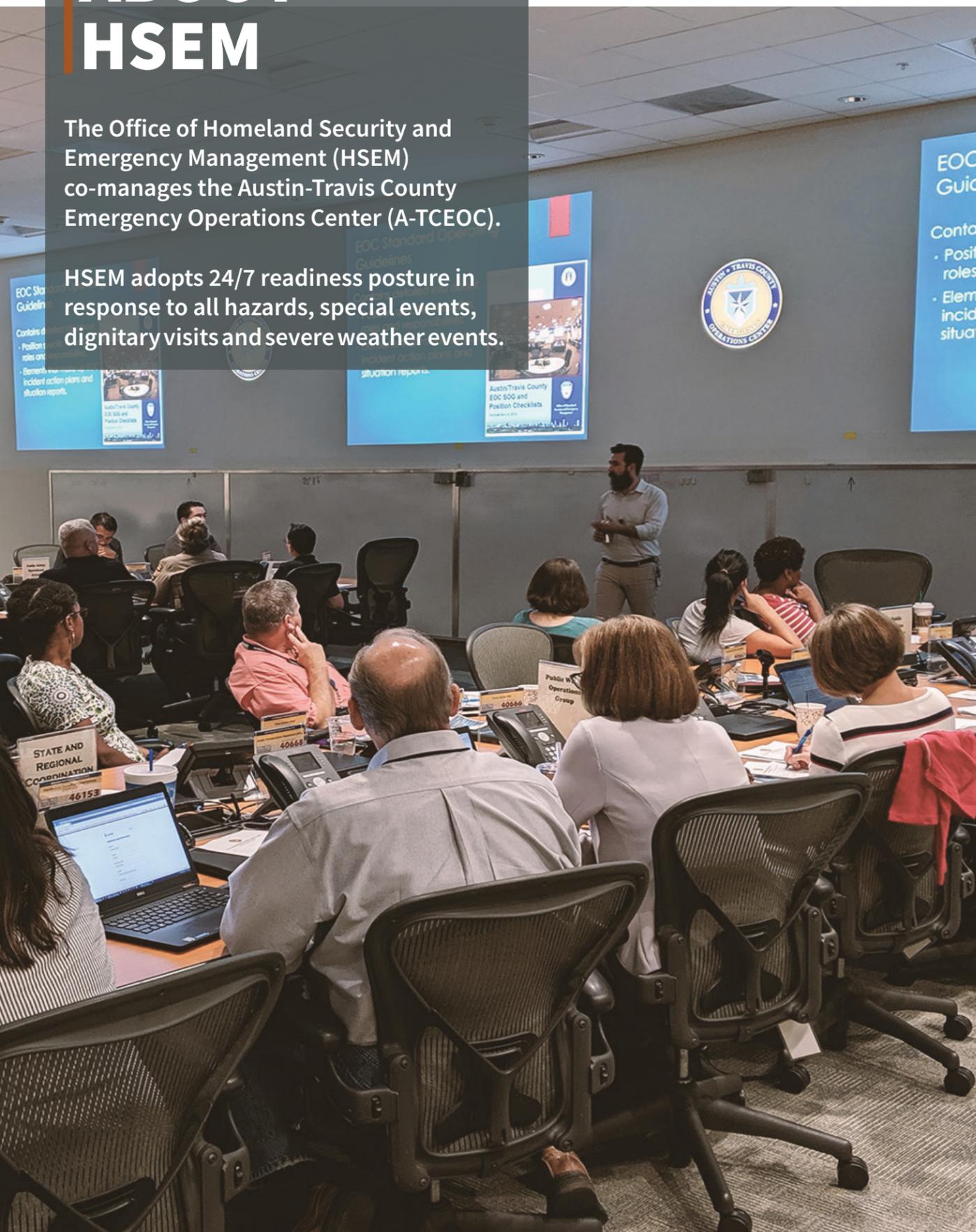
RECOVERY

MITIGATION

ABOUT HSEM

The Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) co-manages the Austin-Travis County Emergency Operations Center (A-TCEOC).

HSEM adopts 24/7 readiness posture in response to all hazards, special events, dignitary visits and severe weather events.



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The City of Austin Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) is proud to present its annual report for 2020.

2020 proved to be anything but a normal year, not only for emergency management, but the Austin community with the challenges we faced. It was a year that brought struggles for many, but was also a year that saw Austinites and other communities come together and lead the way in tackling a global pandemic.

On March 1, 2020 the Austin-Travis County Emergency Operations Center (A-TCEOC) was activated in response to COVID-19. In truly historical times, emergency operations have now been sustained well into 2021 – over a yearlong activation. The COVID-19 response has brought together partners and organizations across the region to provide support and care for individuals.

While COVID-19 was the headline for 2020, our staff has continually met additional challenges head on as other events unfolded throughout the year – staff pursued training and learning how to combat new emergencies that our community faces, and handled numerous severe weather events ranging from extreme heat to bitter cold. Additionally, Austin became a shelter for many Hurricane Laura evacuees.

In 2019, we began redevelopment our emergency plans to ensure that our team maintains both its focus and readiness posture to mitigate, respond to and recover from all-hazards emergencies that affect our community, and that mission did not end with COVID-19. These processes carried on well into 2020 as we adapted and modified plans to meet growing challenges and is a process that will continue every year.

The lessons learned from 2020 will be invaluable to our vision of being a disaster-prepared and resilient community and will shape the future of emergency management responses. The partnerships forged during the trying year will ensure that we are more prepared than ever.

Juan M. Ortiz, USCGR Ret.
Director

HSEM STAFF

Executive Staff

Juan Ortiz | **Director**
Scott Swearingin | **Assistant Director**
Stephanie Peden | **Executive Assistant**

Emergency Management Programs

Louis Gonzales | **Chief Emergency Plans Officer**
Bill Wilson | **Chief Emergency Plans Officer**
Donny Cummings | **Senior Emergency Plans Officer**
Jason Haun | **Senior Emergency Plans Officer**
Robin Wiatrek | **Senior Emergency Plans Officer**

Community Preparedness Programs

Bryce Bencivengo | **Public Information & Marketing Program Manager**
Matt Lara | **Public Information Specialist**
Nelson Andrade | **Community Engagement Specialist**

Business Programs

Aoife Longmore | **Risk and Recovery Program Manager**
Bing Chen | **Program Manager**
Cindy Hood | **Contract Management Specialist**

Vision

A disaster-prepared and resilient community.

Mission

To serve as the coordinating focal point for preparedness, response, recovery, and education in any emergency or disaster that disrupts the community.

2023 Strategic Direction Goal

Promote a community and organization-wide commitment to disaster preparedness, response and recovery.



Combined Transportation, Emergency, and Communications Center (CTECC)

5010 Old Manor Road, Austin, TX 78723
512.974.0450 | www.austinhsem.com



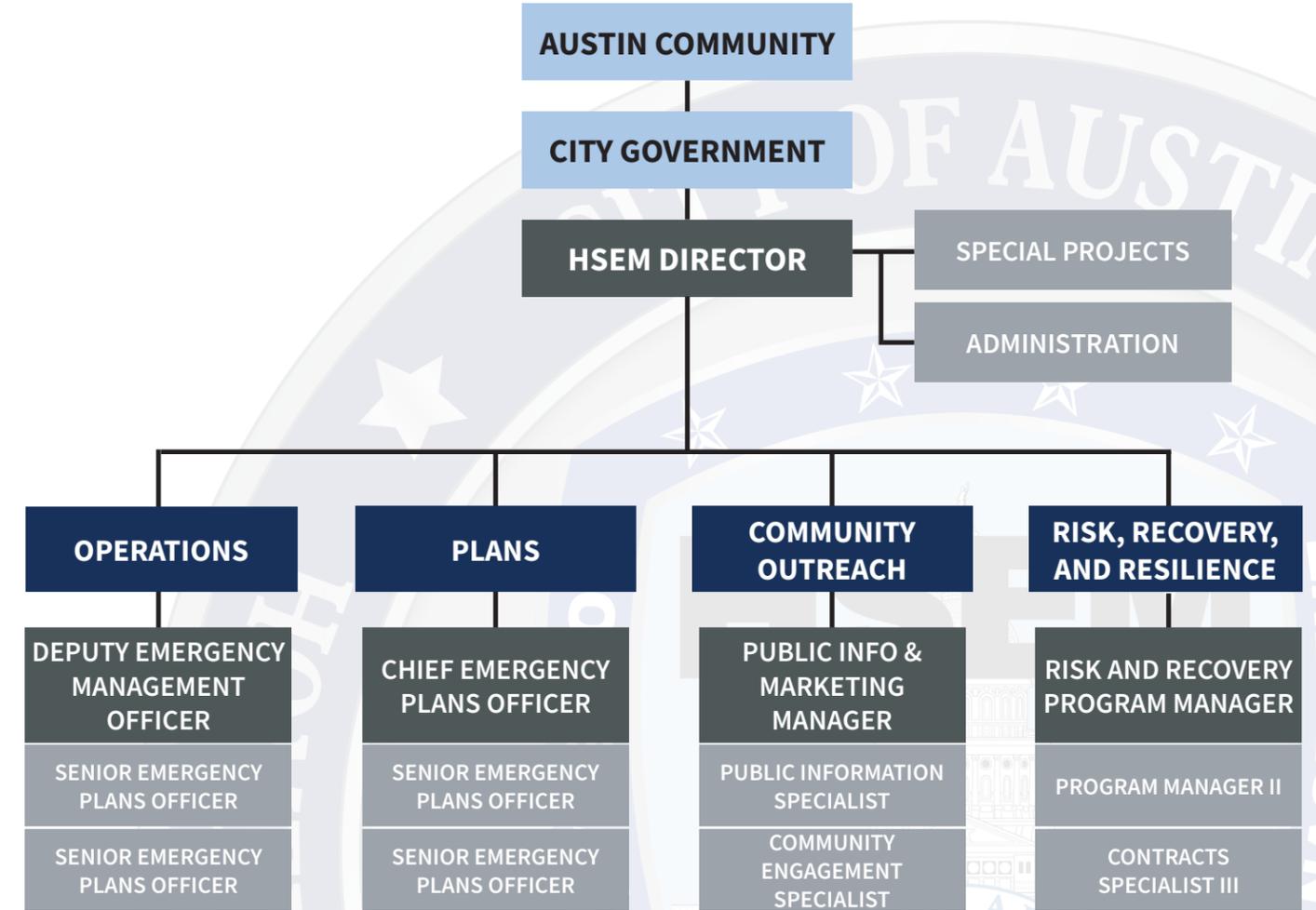
ORG CHART

The reporting structure for the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.



CITY OF AUSTIN

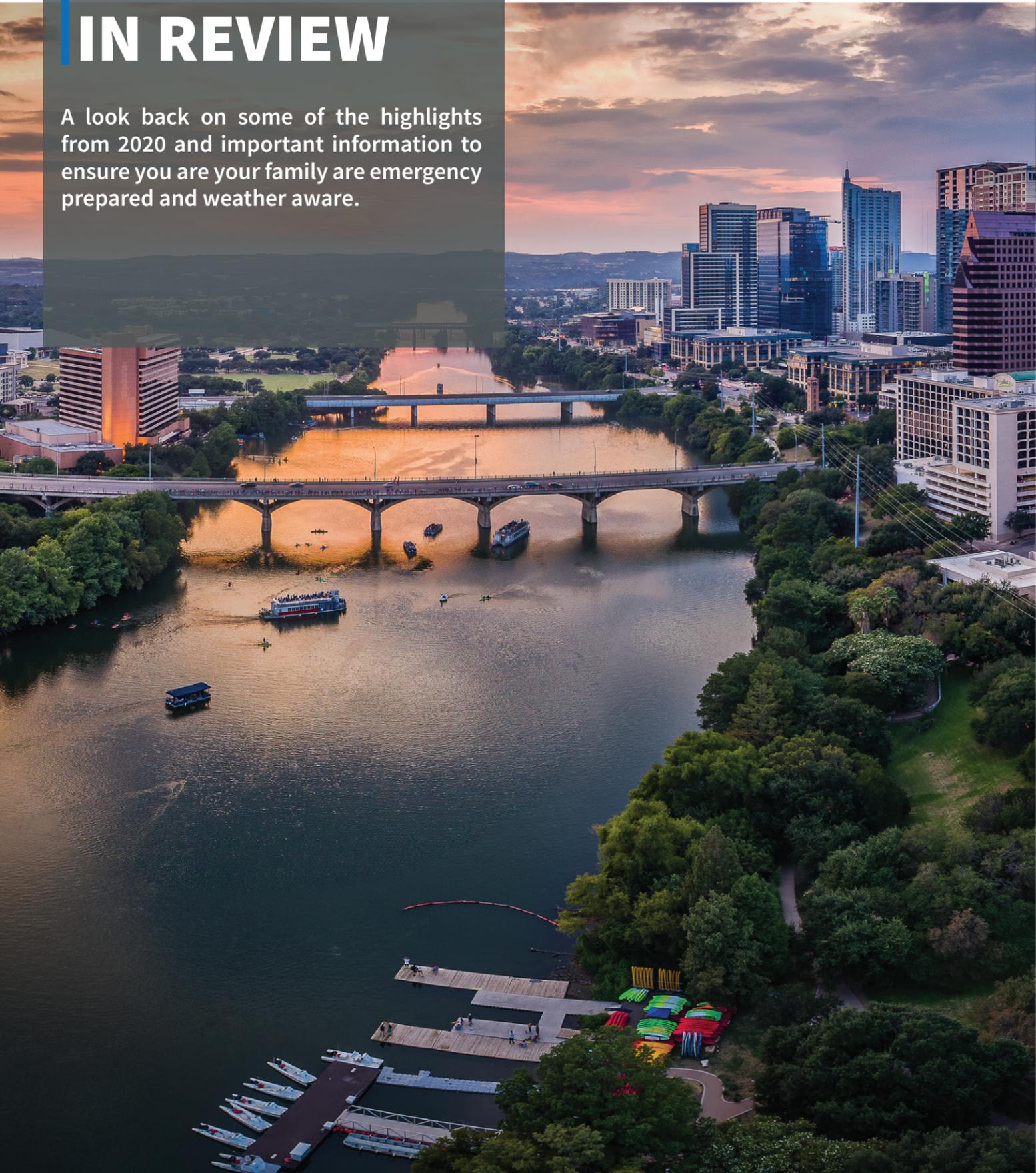
OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



The Austin-Travis County Emergency Operations Center (A-TCEOC) was activated in response to COVID-19 on March 1, 2020. HSEM staff expanded to over 65 full-time employees with more than 440 employees working under A-TCEOC operations.

A YEAR IN REVIEW

A look back on some of the highlights from 2020 and important information to ensure you and your family are emergency prepared and weather aware.



COVID-19 OPERATIONS

**Austin-Travis County
Emergency Operations
Center activated on
March 1, 2020.**

In late 2019, City of Austin Public Health and the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM), along with Austin Public Health, began monitoring the 2019 novel coronavirus named COVID-19. On March 1, 2020, the Austin-Travis County Emergency Operations Center was activated to respond to the growing threat from the pandemic. While emergency operations have continued well into 2021, the partnerships throughout the community from the state and federal levels, to the local nonprofit/community organizations and hospitals have shown the capabilities of resilience and preparedness.

HSEM staff, leading emergency management sections of planning, operations, logistics, and finance, worked tirelessly on behalf of the community to craft programs in mitigating spread among the community, and develop mass testing operations. While mass vaccination efforts would not be implemented until 2021, the work and lessons learned throughout 2020 provide critical groundwork and mobilization practices and procedures for future emergencies and disasters.



**Total HSEM Staff Employed
65
Employees**



**Total City Response Hours
1,100,000+
Hours**



**Hand Sanitizer Distributed
71,576
Units**



**Total Admitted (ProLodge)
536
Individuals**



**Total Admitted (IsoFac)
1,103
Patients**



**Total PPE Distributed
11,860,559
Pieces**

All numbers are through 12/31/20



TRAINING AND OTHER PROJECTS

Austin-Travis County participate in joint Department of Defense exercise

The City of Austin, Travis County, and Joint Task Force Civil Support (JTF-CS) from the United States Department of Defense conducted training in Austin in late January 2020. Local public safety agencies trained alongside Joint Task Force Civil Support to exercise local agencies capabilities to respond to a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) event and the cascading impacts an emergency of that nature would cause.

The overall focus of the exercise was to simulate the response to a fictional nuclear incident. JTF-CS and its attached Defense CBRN Response Force (DCRF) units moved to the affected area to support local, state, and federal authorities. The exercise provided a focus on sustaining command and control and a coordinated response to ensure the headquarters and DCRF units are trained and ready to execute their CBRN response mission in support of partner agencies. As many as 1,000 Department of Defense personnel, 50 City of Austin, and 10 Travis County staff from various departments participated in the training

Austin-Travis County selected for training at FEMA Emergency Management Institute

A group of 75 people from the City of Austin, Travis County, and other local partners traveled to Emmitsburg, Maryland in February 2020 to FEMA's Emergency Management institute for training. The group attended the Integrated Emergency Management Course, which is a four-day, exercise-based training activity for Emergency Operations Center personnel to practice simulated, but realistic, crisis situations, within a learning environment. The City of Austin worked with FEMA to simulate a response to a severe winter weather scenario.

The 75 people who attended this training included the Mayor, City Manager, Assistant City Managers, Department Directors, key personnel from across the City and County, and leaders of critical agencies that provide public services. For a week, these leaders planned and worked together to better prepare Austin for the next disaster.



Hurricane Laura Sheltering

In late August 2020, Hurricane Laura made landfall along the Texas Gulf Coast as Category 4. Displacing thousands of residents, Austin became a temporary home to many while waiting for the storm to pass. While the Emergency Operations Center had been activated months prior due to COVID-19, teams shifted focus to provide aid and shelter to those coming from the Gulf Coast.

Providing a unique challenge due to COVID-19, and in contrast to past weather events, evacuees had to be sheltered in individual hotel rooms instead of traditional large common areas. Teams worked to secure hotel rooms across the region and established a central check-in at the Circuit of Americas facility in eastern Travis County.

Various departments from across the City of Austin, Travis County, the Texas Department of Emergency Management, and the Red Cross placed approximately 3,000 evacuees in more than 1,000 hotel rooms across the Austin metropolitan area. Additionally, the Austin Convention Center that was in the process of being established as a COVID Alternate Care Site, transitioned to operate as a secondary location allowing for safe distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

While many individuals arrived in personally-owned-vehicles, a large number of evacuees required coordination and transportation back to their homes along the Gulf Coast. HSEM, Travis County Office of Emergency Management, and the Texas State Guard partnered to provide resources needed to get individuals home after the all clear was given.

Ready Central Texas App Development

In the fall of 2020, HSEM and the Travis County Office of Emergency Management partnered to deploy an emergency preparedness mobile application called Ready Central Texas.

The app is additional tool for Central Texans to better prepare for and be alerted about emergencies by providing resources and information for citizens across the region regarding natural disasters, severe weather and other emergencies.

Ready Central Texas features news updates and alerts, emergency preparedness resources, informational videos, document library, and health resources from Austin, the State of Texas, and the Federal Government.

For more information visit: www.austintexas.gov/prepared





Cold Weather Shelter Operations

As part of emergency management operations, sheltering for individuals experiencing homelessness and their pets involves a collaborated effort among the city, county, and many non-profit agencies. HSEM in coordination with these partner organizations manages shelter operations that work to establish sheltering sites and provide transportation to sites when activated.

As COVID-19 became more prevalent, HSEM staff had to reevaluate a process that has been in place for more than a decade for all of aspects of the cold weather sheltering process to follow COVID-19 precautions and safety measures. Partnerships were expanded and evolved during pandemic operations included health screenings and testing, coordination with isolation facilities, and establish socially distanced sheltering sites.

In 2020, there were a total of six shelter activations that provided shelter to over 600 individuals during cold weather events

2021 Emergency Preparedness Calendar Development

For more than a decade, HSEM has created a community calendar that has provided information and tips about emergency awareness and preparedness.

Beginning with development in summer of 2020, HSEM wanted to engage more with community for development of the 2021 calendar. Partnering with the Travis County Office of Emergency Management, the team looked to the young artists in the community asking for 2nd through 5th graders across Travis County to share what they believed to be the most important safety information.

Working with the local independent school districts, numerous artwork pieces were submitted to create the 2021 calendar. Artwork ranged from tornado safety, emergency kit preparedness, and in the spirit of COVID-19 reminding the public to wear their masks.

Each month features student artwork across various topics, as well as actions items families should accomplish. The overall theme focuses on making a plan and discussing as a family the importance in preparing for all around emergencies.

For more information on the calendar and emergency preparedness information visit: www.AustinHSEM.com

LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT PARTICIPATION

- Austin ISD
- De Valle ISD
- Dripping Springs ISD
- Eanes ISD
- Elgin ISD
- Hays CISD
- Lago Vista ISD
- Lake Travis ISD
- Leander ISD
- Manor ISD
- Marble Falls ISD
- Pflugerville ISD
- Round Rock ISD

More information about the 2021 Emergency Preparedness Calendar at: www.austintexas.gov/hsemcalendar



Warn Central Texas

The top five hazards that Central Texas residents face include floods, wildfire, severe weather (tornadoes, ice, high winds), pandemic, and hazardous materials spills.

Prevention through preparedness is the first line of defense when it comes to protecting yourself and your family during emergencies. Know and be prepared before a disaster strikes by receiving critical alerts for you and your family.

Stay informed before and during disasters that affect your community by registering for an emergency notification system. Visit WarnCentralTexas.org to sign up to receive bilingual (English and/or Spanish) emergency alerts that impact your neighborhood by text, email, or phone.



City of Austin Office Homeland Security and Emergency Management

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