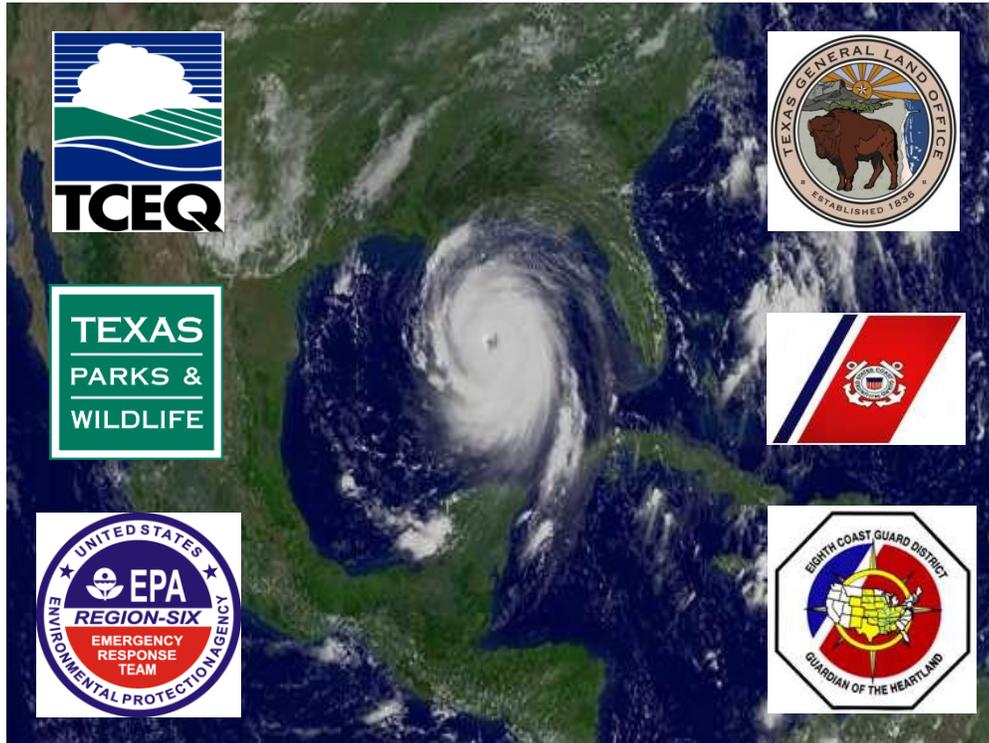


AFTER ACTION REVIEW CONSOLIDATED REPORT

MULTI-AGENCY HURRICANE FIELD EXERCISE CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS



Prepared for

THE NATURAL DISASTER OPERATIONAL WORKGROUP

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

EPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
GPS	global positioning system
ICP	incident command post
ICS	incident command system
IT	information technology
NDOW	Natural Disaster Operational Workgroup
OSC	On-scene Coordinator
TCEQ	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
TGLO	Texas General Land Office
TPWD	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
USCG	United States Coast Guard
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Response personnel from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region 6; United States Coast Guard (USCG); Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ); Texas General Land Office (TGLO); Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD); and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) participated in a large-scale hurricane exercise on 16 to 20 July 2012 in Corpus Christi, Texas to continue disaster response preparedness training in Texas with procedures developed by the Natural Disaster Operational Workgroup (NDOW). Participating personnel from all agencies totaled 189. Select agency management representatives, a representative of the Governor of Texas, and local response personnel were also in attendance, bringing the total number of participants, including observers, to 209.

Significant planning and scenario creation (category 3 hurricane) activities occurred prior to the large-scale exercise. These activities included creation of exercise objectives; creation of targets for facility/vessel discharges, orphan containers, and damaged drinking/waste water facilities; and coordination of logistics for mobilization of personnel and capital equipment. Exercise participants and capital equipment were mobilized to Corpus Christi on 15 and 16 July 2012. All participants and equipment were demobilized to stationed offices on 20 July 2012.

2. OBJECTIVES

The overall objectives of the large-scale exercise were as follows:

- Performance of all activities in a safe and productive manner;
- Preparation for hurricane season by conducting a large-scale field exercise that utilized the standard operating procedures developed by the NDOW;
- Establishment of an incident command post (ICP) for incident command and three branch level commands that made use of incident command system (ICS) principles to plan, coordinate, and execute daily field operations;
- Fostering of team building among the personnel from the six agencies both in incident command and field operations;
- Specific utilization of processes associated with data management, logistics, communications, and personnel/equipment tracking.

3. ACTIVITIES

Exercise participants performed the following activities:

- 16 July 2012 – Response Manager data entry and Hazard Evaluation Field Data Sheet training was provided to an estimated 45 personnel from 1300 to 1700 hours at the Natural Resources Center on the Texas A & M, Corpus Christi campus;
- 17 July 2012 – At 0800 hours, all exercise participants were given an exercise briefing at the ICP. The ICP was a pre-designated staging area (Al-Amin Shriner Facility, 2001 Suntide Rd, Corpus Christi, Texas). Three branch locations had been previously identified by the exercise planners as Ingleside High School (Alpha Branch), Gulf Coast Racing (Bravo Branch), and the visitor center at the Padre Island National Seashore (Charlie Branch). At the conclusion of the operations briefing, all staff assumed their respective pre-designated positions in the ICS structure within the ICP or assigned branch;
- 18 July 2012 – Position-specific field and command activities of participants occurred throughout the day;
- 19 July 2012 – Position-specific field and command activities of participants occurred from 0800 – 1200 hours. At 1300 hours, a final operational briefing was provided by incident command staff to all participants. From 1400 – 1530 hours, section and branch-specific after action reviews were conducted.
- 20 July 2012 – All participants demobilized to stationed offices.

4. AFTER ACTION REVIEW

An after action review is a tool utilized by emergency and disaster response personnel to provide the means for continuing improvement for future response activities. The process includes determination of activities, processes, and procedures that were successful and should be utilized in future emergency or disaster responses in addition to activities, processes, and procedures that need review and revision. The following exercise sections or branches participated in the after action review process:

- ICP Command and Safety section – Facilitator, John Martin, EPA.
- ICP Planning section – Facilitator, Matt Loesel, EPA.
- ICP Operations and Data Management sections – Facilitator, Gary Moore, EPA.
- ICP Logistics section – Facilitator, Lisa Bokun, EPA.
- ICP Check-In section – Facilitator, Jeanelle Martinez, Consequences Management Advisory Team.
- ICP Operations Briefing Overall Comments – Facilitators, ICP staff.

- Alpha Branch – Facilitator, Jeff Kunze, TCEQ.
- Bravo Branch – Facilitator, Johanna Gregory, TPWD.
- Charlie Branch – Facilitator, LT Dan Denham, USCG.

4.1 CONSOLIDATED COMMENTS

4.1.1 ICP Comments

4.1.1.1 *What Worked Well*

The following are consolidated comments of the after action reviews of all ICP sections of activities, processes, or procedures that worked well:

- The exercise objectives were met (overall comment).
- State and Federal agencies worked well together (overall comment).
- Partnerships were developed (ICP Command and Safety).
- The safety message was received by all participants (ICP Command and Safety).
- Commonality of tools to accomplish data management activities was beneficial (e.g., direct incorporation of TGLO sensitive habitat information [ICP Operations and Data Management sections]).
- Very good information technology (IT) support (ICP Planning section).
- The rolling situation report was an asset (ICP Planning section).
- On-site National Weather Service personnel were beneficial (ICP Planning section).
- Joint coordination with TCEQ, TGLO, and EPA was beneficial (ICP Logistics section).
- Local participation by personnel is critical to the strategy to fulfill requests (ICP Logistics section).
- Very accurate head counts (ICP Check-In section).
- It was very beneficial having the computer infrastructure to print bar code labels on-site (ICP Check-In section).

4.1.1.2 *Areas in Need of Review or Revision*

The following are consolidated comments of the after action reviews of all ICP sections of activities, processes, or procedures that could use review or revision:

- Communications reliability needs improvement (overall comment).
- Field staff were not provided a media plan (overall comment).
- Directions in the playbooks related to use of the buckets needs more detail or emphasis so response teams are clear on what to do (overall comment).
- Interconnectivity between ICS form 215 and 215A can be improved (ICP Command and Safety).
- There is a need for standardization of Level D personal protection equipment throughout responders (e.g., safety vests [ICP Command and Safety]).
- Response Manager – There were syncing difficulties and trouble getting updates and training on updates (ICP Operations and Data Management sections).
- ICS forms training is needed (ICP Operations and Data Management sections). It was recommended this type of training be the focus of 2013 NDOW training.
- ICS position-specific training is needed (ICP Operations and Data Management sections).
- Communications – Internet speed, printer access, and voice communications to branches (ICP Operations and Data Management sections) need improvement. Additionally, the need to form a Communications group is apparent (Paisley/EPA, Crunk/TCEQ, Saenz/GLO, USCG). Communications interoperability should be a focus for the Communications group. Furthermore, the need to identify redundant systems and formulate a plan based on existing resources is apparent.
- Increased internet bandwidth or capability is needed (ICP Planning section).
- The building for the incident command post was not ideal because of noise associated with the air conditioning units (ICP Planning section).
- IT access for responders and equipment. Personal devices should not be on the network (ICP Logistics section).
- Understanding of equipment capabilities and availability (ICP Logistics section). The NDOW needs to create a Logistics group (Saenz/GLO, Garcia/TCEQ, Bokun/EPA).
- A more detailed inventory of the equipment in the box is needed (ICP Logistics section).
- Generic terms in Asset Tracker need to be eliminated, or an Asset Tracker SOP needs to be developed (ICP Check-In section).
- A clear review of Asset Tracker data is required (ICP Check-In section).

- A procedure for handling observers or very important persons is needed (ICP Check-In section).
- Identification of a check-in location and the check-in personnel in the branches should be identified in the organization charts within the Incident Action Plan (ICP Check-In section).

4.1.2 Branch Comments

4.1.2.1 What Worked Well

The following are consolidated comments of the after action reviews of all the branches of activities, processes, or procedures that worked well:

- The location of the branch worked very well (Alpha Branch).
- There was good connectivity between different systems between the agencies (Alpha Branch).
- All members within the branch were willing to assist each other (Alpha Branch).
- The three-branch director setup worked well. All the directors worked well together, dividing and conquering the duties (Bravo Branch).
- The iPad Response Manager Application worked well (Bravo Branch). Check with On-scene Coordinator (OSC) Delgado on status of the iPad application and any updates.
- Multi-agency teams worked well because all team members brought individual knowledge of their respective agency resources (Bravo Branch).
- Various agency participants got the job done and overcame challenges with synergy and effective work processes (Charlie Branch).
- Good data was collected and utilized in the branch. Data management staff (contractor) were knowledgeable and available to assist within the branch (Charlie Branch).
- All capital and support equipment (command posts, generators, tents, port-a-potties, hand wash stations) were in-place when personnel arrived at the branch (Charlie Branch).

4.1.2.2 Areas in Need of Review or Revision

The following are consolidated comments of the after action reviews of all branches of activities, processes, or procedures that could use review or revision:

- The first day was not well organized, and personnel were pushed to accomplish too much (Alpha Branch).
- There were problems with internet connectivity and radio communications (Alpha Branch).
- Communications needs to be maintained in accordance with the Communications Plan (Alpha Branch).
- Response Manager training is needed in smaller groups on a more frequent basis (Alpha Branch).
- A list is needed prior to deployment to an exercise or actual response of equipment that is needed by responders (Bravo Branch).
- NDOW documents need to be in an editable document format. The map request form could not be edited (pdf [Bravo Branch]). Make map request and 213RR forms a writable pdf document.
- A list of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reimbursable response equipment needs to be created (Bravo Branch); Anthony Buck will evaluate this need for TCEQ. A list of words (e.g., assessment instead of reconnaissance) to be utilized in ICS documents (e.g., 214B form) that is associated with disaster response reimbursement would be beneficial.
- A manual means for check-in is needed (e.g., phone call [Charlie Branch]).
- Evaluate loading Orphan Container points into global positioning system (GPS) units for use in the field by Hazard Evaluation Teams (Charlie Branch).
- Evaluate the creation of additional guidance for ICS forms, and make them consistent with additional detailed instructions (Charlie Branch).
- Rotate ICS form tasks between members of individual branches (Charlie Branch).

5. QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

Five additional specific questions were provided to all the sections and branches and were discussed in the after action reviews. The questions and responses are summarized below:

Did the NDOW website provide useful information? Yes _____ No _____ Totals: Yes = 4 (2 branches and 2 ICP sections); No = 2 (1 branch and 1 ICP section); Yes and No = 1 (1 ICP section); No comment = 1 (1 ICP section).

Were communications resources adequate? Yes _____ No _____ Totals: Yes = 3 (2 ICP sections); No = 5 (3 branches and 2 ICP sections).

Were computer infrastructure resources (printers, Internet speed) adequate? Yes _____ No _____ Totals: Yes = 2 (1 branch and 1 ICP section); No = 5 (2 branches and 3 ICP sections); Yes and No = 1 (1 ICP section).

Did the Hazard Evaluation Field Data Sheets function as intended? Yes _____ No _____ Totals: Yes = 4 (3 branches and 1 ICP section); No = None; No comment = 4 (4 ICP sections).

Is additional training needed (e.g. ICS, data management, etc.)? Yes _____ No _____ Totals: Yes = 7 (3 branches and 4 ICP sections); No comment = 1 (1 ICP section).

6. SUMMARY

The following is an overall summary of the after action review:

- Based on the comments of participants and observations of the controllers of the exercise, the objectives of the exercise were met.
- The exercise was well designed, and activities required to be performed were realistic. Future exercises of this scale will require creation of more targets (lesson learned).
- Partnerships between individuals within the six agencies were enhanced as a result of the exercise.
- Communications remain problematic during an exercise or response. Internet access and speed are a function of satellite capabilities and bandwidth. Increased satellite capabilities and bandwidth equivocate to more access at higher speeds.
- Voice communications with handheld and portable radios as well as voice over internet protocol telephones was listed as an area that required additional review or resources. Handheld and portable radios have inherent limitations based on distance (line of sight). Voice over internet protocol telephones are more effective with increased internet

bandwidth. Training of responders to use voice over internet protocol telephones might be beneficial.

- Additional training was requested by many of the ICP sections and within the branches in the information submitted in the after action reviews. Participants requested ICS position-specific training and Response Manager Training be held prior to the exercise. The exercise type of training format was indicated as preferential to many of the participants compared to classroom setting type of training.