




## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Marc A. Ott, City Manager 

**DATE:** May 27, 2015

**SUBJECT:** Updates on Flood Response

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Multiple City departments continue their work today to evaluate damage, clear debris and begin necessary repair work after the weekend's flooding events. To help you respond to questions you may receive from constituents, I wanted to share a summary of our response activities and an overview of the services and information we have available for those dealing with the impacts of local flooding. I also wanted to take an opportunity to share with you some of the details of our protocols for emergency response, and thoughts moving forward that may better prepare you for calls from constituents during and immediately after a disaster.

First, let me say that we are still evaluating all of the factors that contributed to flooding over the weekend. During any circumstance like this, there are multiple factors that can lead to a flooding event. Duration and intensity of local rainfall, ground conditions, velocity of water flow, and factors upstream all play a part. While flood mitigation efforts can help protect property from common conditions, the uncommon conditions we've seen over the past few weeks can be challenging – and often expensive – to mitigate.

### **Immediate Assistance**

Staff has transitioned to recovery operations, conducting damage assessments and coordinating debris removal and service restoration throughout the community. We are asking residents and business owners to contact 3-1-1 to request service. This includes:

- Pick-up or removal of large limbs or household items damaged by flooding.
- Clogged drains and culverts.
- Damage to trees on public property or in the right-of-way.
- Damage to power lines.
- Flooding on private property (residential or commercial).
- Referral to the Emergency Home Repair program, administered by the Austin Area Urban League.

We are also asking the public to use caution around trails and bodies of water until damage and safety assessments are complete. If a trail or park is closed, do not attempt to bypass barriers or signs. Any damage should be reported to 3-1-1.

It is our understanding that [Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid](#) has opened a hotline (1-866-757-1570) for anyone who may need legal advice as they work through the repair process. Anyone reporting issues with their insurance carrier may also contact the [Texas Department of Insurance](#) Consumer Helpline at 1-800-252-3439.

### **Emergency Operations Center Activations**

During any potential flood event, our Flood Early Warning System (FEWS) staff in the Watershed Protection Department actively monitors conditions across the region days in advance. This information, combined with updates from the National Weather Service, is shared with Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM). If the HSEM Director determines that the threat of flooding is sufficient to activate the Emergency Operations Center, he consults with me and we make the decision to activate. This does not mean that flooding is imminent – only that the indicators are strong enough that we feel it necessary to pull together and begin coordinating and staging resources. This was the case over the weekend.

Representatives from the City Manager’s Office, along with Fire, Police, EMS, HSEM, FEWS, Public Works, Communications and Public Information and other departments and partner agencies can then work collaboratively from a single location to receive updates and respond accordingly throughout the event. Watershed Protection, Police, Public Works and Transportation all have a role in monitoring roadways and low-water crossings and reporting any changes in conditions during a major storm. Fire and EMS work collaboratively to stage and deploy rescue resources as the conditions require. Should shelter operations be required, Parks and Recreation works with the Library Department, Animal Services and the American Red Cross to coordinate activities.

### **Recovery Operations**

Immediately after an event, Public Works, Austin Resource Recovery, Code, Economic Development, Development Review and Financial and Administrative Services (FASD) take a more prominent role as the focus shifts to recovery efforts. In the initial stages of recovery, our first priority is to focus on the clearance of roadways, restoration of utility services and damage assessment. FASD will establish a specific accounting code for all recovery efforts, which helps track our costs for any potential reimbursement from the Federal government. The Mayor may request a local disaster declaration through the Governor’s office, who then can determine whether to request Federal assistance – most often through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

We are presently in the recovery stage from events over the past weekend. Here are some of the reported statistics from our departments as-of yesterday afternoon:

- **Austin Energy** responded to 30,000 power outages. At this time, all power has been restored after 37 pole replacements and 147 downed wires.
- **EMS** reported 29 water-related incidents, including water rescues and evacuations.

- **Austin Fire Department** responded to 427 incidents between 2:30 and 7 p.m. on May 25. Of those, 187 calls were flood-related. A watercraft ban for Ladybird Lake and all creeks within the city was extended through Noon today.
- **Austin Resource Recovery** crews responded to approximately 200 requests for storm debris removal. They have moved dumpsters to the most affected flood areas to assist residents and business owners with debris removal. 74% of requests have come from ZIP codes 78751, 78748, 78753 and 78745.
- **Austin Water** is recovering from a number of wastewater overflows, none of which are expected to impact the water supply for AWU customers. Those using private wells within ½-mile of the affected areas are encouraged to boil water prior to use. These types of overflows occur when manhole covers are compromised due to flooding and excessive storm water enters the collection system. We are able to partially treat, disinfect and blend with treated water at our regional facilities, but any unplanned discharge of water is considered overflow and is reported to TCEQ accordingly.
- **Austin Animal Center** reopened on Tuesday for adoptions, returns-to-owners and foster volunteers. They reopened for all operations effective today. The Town Lake facility will remain closed until clean-up and standing water are addressed.
- **Austin Code** inspected more than 120 properties as of today for potential structural damage. These inspections were concentrated in areas along Shoal, Waller, Boggy and Onion creeks. No dangerous structural conditions have been identified. Those inspections will continue throughout the week.
- **Parks and Recreation** crews continue damage assessment at pools, parks and trails. The status of parks facilities will be updated periodically on the [Austin Parks and Recreation Closures Page](#).
- **Public Works** has received 436 customer service requests, and have removed more than 90 trees and limbs from the right-of-way. One street (5<sup>th</sup> and Matamoros) incurred surface damage that is currently being repaired.
- **Building Services** has completed a preliminary assessment of City buildings. While some facilities experienced water damage, none was expected to disrupt City operations.
- **Development Services** is encouraging residents to take photos and proceed with removal of any protected trees that were damaged and may pose an imminent risk to life and property. They have also initiated their Expedited Permit process to help residents return properties to pre-flood condition. They will also expedite site plan exemption requests for any repairs that require site plan review. Requestors in either case should be sure to note that the application is related to “Memorial Day Flood 2015.”
- **Economic Development** has contacted local businesses, encouraging them to work with the [Small Business Development Program](#) for information and assistance. They have also distributed information to 3-1-1 and to the One-Stop Shop at One Texas Center.

We will provide updated information on recovery operations by tomorrow afternoon. At the same time, our FEWS staff is actively monitoring anticipated storm conditions over the next few days and we will provide any necessary updates on preparedness activities.

I am sensitive to the increased demands placed on your offices to answer questions during an emergency activation, and have asked staff to evaluate ways we might provide additional detailed updates as events unfold. As you can imagine, every event is fluid and often fast-moving, so we want to be sure that the measures we put in place are both effective for you and efficient for our responders.

It has also occurred to me that many of you may not be familiar with the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) or the Combined Transportation, Emergency and Communications Center (CTECC) where the EOC is located. Once we get through the issues immediately before us, I've asked HSEM Director Otis Latin to reach out to each of you to schedule a tour and discussion of your needs and expectations.

On behalf of all of our responders, thank you for your support and encouragement.

CC: Assistant City Managers  
Ray Baray, Chief of Staff  
Otis Latin, HSEM Director