RGV AEROMEDICAL HURRICANE EVACUATION FULL SCALE EXERCISE

JUNE 2-9, 2016
Exercise Objectives

Goals, Purpose and Scope

- The goal of this full-scale exercise is to determine the state’s overall ability to assist local communities in the evacuation of its citizens in the impact area using air transportation for both general population and medical evacuees.

- The purpose is to build air evacuation and shelter capabilities in conjunction with local, state and federal partners.

- The scope of the exercise will be limited to specifically identified local, regional, state and federal entities to ensure successful testing of capabilities.
Exercise Scenario Overview: Health Emergency Preparedness Program

A Category 4 Hurricane (Tejas) has formed over the Atlantic Ocean.

Forecasts predict that this hurricane will result in direct impact to the Lower Rio Grande Valley area of South Texas necessitating aerial evacuation of medical patients from three Cameron County hospitals.
Cameron County is where?

- Located in Deep South Texas area commonly known as the Rio Grande Valley
- County Judge: Eddie Treviño, Jr.
- Population of approximately 422,000 (3.9% Increase from 2010)
  - 87.7% Hispanic Population
- 16 Municipalities including Harlingen, Brownsville, and South Padre Island
- 9 Independent School Districts
- 3 International Border Crossings to Mexico
  - Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico Population: ~520,000
  - 250,000 monthly crossings
Rio Grande Valley: At a Glance

Establishing a Need:

- 1.3 Million People (≈ 66,000 People 2012-2016)
- ~ 10% of Households with No Vehicle
- 26% Elderly Households
- 6% of Elderly Households in Poverty
- 28% of RGV Households in Poverty
- 2 Major Hurricane Evacuation Routes in RGV
- 34,623 Number of Evacuees Needing Transportation Assistance
- 500 Number of Potential Medical Patients in Cameron County Hospitals Needing Transport to ACS

“Rio Grande Valley Tops List of ‘America’s Poorest Cities’”
- Texas Monthly (2015)

“In Texas, Poverty Rate Highest At Border”
- Texas Tribune (2016)

“Rio Grande Valley Becomes Epicenter of Growing Humanitarian Crisis”
- Texas Observer (2014)

“Checkpoint Could Bottleneck Storm Evacuation”
- The Monitor (2010)

“In immigrants face hurricane evacuation dilemma”
- USA Today (2008)

“Dolly’s Damage Hits 1 Billion in the Rio Grande Valley”
- Houston Chronicle (2008)
### 2016 Rio Grande Valley Hurricane Exercise

Estimated Number of Evacuees for Cameron, Willacy and Hidalgo Counties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tropical Cyclone Intensity*</th>
<th>Estimated Number of Evacuees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cameron County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tropical Storm</td>
<td>71,224</td>
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<tr>
<td>Category One Hurricane</td>
<td>125,851</td>
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<tr>
<td>Category Two Hurricane</td>
<td>223,113</td>
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<tr>
<td>Category Three Hurricane</td>
<td>319,317</td>
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<tr>
<td>Category Four Hurricane</td>
<td>367,968</td>
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<tr>
<td>Category Five Hurricane</td>
<td>382,818</td>
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</table>

*Source: Lindell et. al, Behavioral Study, Valley Hurricane Evacuation Study, Willacy, Cameron, and Hidalgo Counties, Texas. 2013*  

A Category Four Hurricane Could Cause More Than 1.1 Million Valley Residents to Evacuate
Ground Evacuation Challenges

- Relative isolation: San Antonio, the closest city with large shelter capacity, is 250 miles away.

- U.S. Route 281 North from Edinburg is the only safe means of egress prior to a hurricane.
  - U.S. Route 77 is not a viable option due to its proximity to the coastline.
  - U.S. Route 83 lacks substantial shelter capacity in border communities.

Use of both military and civilian aircraft will be necessary to facilitate evacuation from the RGV.
City Evacuation Challenges

- Develop pick up points in all 16 cities
- Provide transportation for evacuees and pets to hub
- Provide transportation to all 211 request
- Have medical personnel (MIST) available at pick up points
- Cities must work with school districts to provide busses; MOUs established in advance
Hurricane Evacuation Exercise Preparation

- Weekly Planning Meetings commenced in February ‘16 with local hospitals, DSHS Region 11, EMTF-11, TRAC V, TDEM DC-21
- Weekly meetings with Cameron County Department of Health and Human Services, Emergency Management, and local municipalities (Practice Unified Command – Early and Often)
- State Operations Center Workshop in Austin, TX
- Annual State Emergency Management Council Hurricane Workshop
- Daily conference calls with all TSA-V hospitals/healthcare facilities starting June 2, 2016 (H-120)
- STAR Request(s) were submitted to the Office of Emergency Management at H-96 for additional state resources via WebEOC
- Patient Movement Request was submitted by each hospital at H-72
  - Hospitals must engage local ambulance contracts prior to requesting County/State Assistance
2016 Rio Grande Valley Hurricane Exercise

MEDICAL COMPONENT

Local Exercise Play

- VBMC Harlingen
- VBMC B'Ville
- VRMC B'Ville
- SBHS

Aerial Port of Embarkation Valley International Airport (HRL)

State Exercise Play

- Airlift out of Impact Area

Shelter

Cameron County Department of Health & Human Services
2016 Rio Grande Valley Hurricane Exercise
Capabilities Tested – Public Health (PHEP)/Emergency Management

- Examine the ability of the State of Texas and Cameron County to evacuate people from an area of impact to a safe region by providing transportation assets
- Test the means of multi-agency communications, utilized in support of an evacuation from the Rio Grande Valley
- Evaluate the integration of resources in support of a Valley evacuation within all regional, state and federal entities in accordance with established protocols
  - Engage and evaluate municipality Hurricane Evacuation Plans
- Demonstrate ability to provide medical services in support of an air-evacuation
- Test the ability of local jurisdictions to coordinate the return of evacuees following a disaster
Capabilities Tested – Private Sector (HPP)

- Information Sharing
- Emergency Operations Coordination
- Medical Surge
- Recovery/Continuity of Operations

Objectives:

- Testing regional radio system for the coordination of patient movement from VRMC/VBMC to APOE.
- Test the capabilities of cities to transport citizens to hub
- Activate the health care organizations Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and Hurricane Evacuation Plan.
- Exercise the ability to transport and track medical patients to medical evacuation hubs and/or Air Point of Embarkation (APOE) using ETN and/or WebEOC.
Air-Evacuation Exercise Lessons Learned

1. **Electronic Tracking Network (ETN)** – Healthcare Facilities need more people trained on the system along with WebEOC. Agencies should consider creating a cache of equipment for patient tracking that can easily deploy to the facilities. Equipment should already have ETN installed to allow for easy access. Secondary Plan: Pen and Paper!

2. **Local Ambulance Contracts** – Our healthcare facilities need to consider having multiple local contracts/MOU’s in place with EMS for patient transport. A lot of facilities are relying on the same ambulance companies so this may pose an issue if every healthcare facility/hospital is evacuating at the same time.

3. **H-120 Hurricane Plan** – We need to make sure we are including recovery initiatives in our plan as early as H-72. Consider establishing contracts so your agency can be functional post-storm as soon as possible. Where will you be receiving fuel post-hurricane? How soon can debris be picked up at your facility? How soon can contractors start working in the area?
5. **Mental Health/Vulnerable Population** – In the exercise we quickly realized this was going to be a challenge for us transporting those with special needs. Do you have Alternate Care Sites locally you may be able to transport MH patients to? How will we transport these patients out of the Rio Grande Valley?

6. **Communication** – Coordination with law enforcement for those people who will show up before/during/right after storm wanting and needing shelter. What shelters will your county/municipality have available? Expect residents to show up last minute.

7. **Staff Tracking** – Develop a formal process to reach out to staff post-hurricane. A back up plan should be established with alternate contact information. Gasoline for staff vehicles?

8. **Financial Documentation** – Establish a county/municipality finance tracking system. All-Hazards Memorandum of Understanding with local municipalities and school districts.
Air-Evacuation Exercise Lessons Learned

9. **Cities**- Must have contracts in place with school districts to help with transportation of citizens to hub. Must have designated pick up points for citizens to get to.

10. **Parking areas**– develop an area adjacent to hub for parking of vehicles. Several citizens may have the ability to get to a pick up point or Hub but the vehicles will not be able to make the journey out of the Valley.

11. **School Districts**- Must work with cities and county and determine an exact time that they will close.

12. **Recovery/Return of Citizens** – What system is in place for communicating return? Un-loading of luggage/equipment?
After Action Review – Considerations (Public Sector)

- Personnel should be able to navigate to alternate radio channels in the event Regional Event Channels are unavailable
- The Incident Command Structure System should be established by all participating agencies
- All Incident Command Structure members should be trained in ICS 100, 200, 700, 800
- Communication with local law enforcement in the event that community members try to seek shelter at hospitals/school districts last minute
- Undocumented immigrants will not evacuate if it means going through a checkpoint
- Include a plan for vulnerable populations within your municipality (i.e. Hearing Impaired)
- WebEOC Training
Thinking Ahead...

- What’s your closest Evacuation HUB?
  - Cameron County: San Benito High School
  - Hidalgo County: McAllen Convention Center

- Incident Command Center Activated at Corporate HQ with local disaster activations. When will your EOC be activated?

- Are your elected officials (Mayor, City Council, Commissioners) trained in ICS?

- Transportation contracts with local ISDs

- Supplemental Power rented and deployed to hurricane zones and on contract for emergency access

- National Fuel (Diesel and Gasoline) and Water Contracts

- Creating Evacuation Zones for your County
Thinking Ahead...

- Security contract for post event manpower relief
- Truck Rental Contract for Non CDL vans with weekly rates (storage option)
- Refrigeration Truck contract for food storage and separately for morgue support
- Post disaster recovery contract for remediation
- Emergency staffing relief from sister facilities in corporation
- Employee Assistance Fund for post disaster recovery
- Finance and Documentation utilizing ICS Forms (School Districts)*
## Participating Agencies

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participating Organizations</th>
<th>Cameron County</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Federal</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>United States Border Patrol</td>
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<td>US Military Department</td>
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<td>American Red Cross</td>
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<td>Transportation Security Administration</td>
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<td><strong>State</strong></td>
<td>Cameron County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas Department of Emergency Management</td>
<td>Cameron County Department of Health &amp; Human Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas Military Department</td>
<td>EMTF-11</td>
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<td><strong>Cameron County</strong></td>
<td>Hidalgo County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valley Regional Medical Center Brownsville</td>
<td>Cameron County Emergency Management</td>
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<td>Valley Baptist Medical Center Brownsville</td>
<td>San Benito ISD</td>
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<td>Valley Baptist Medical Center Harlingen</td>
<td>Valley International Airport</td>
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<td>Harlingen Medical Center</td>
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<td><strong>Hidalgo County</strong></td>
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<td>Knapp Medical Center</td>
<td>McAllen Medical Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rio Grande Regional Medical Center</td>
<td>Cornerstone Regional Medical Center</td>
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<td>Doctor’s Hospital at Renaissance</td>
<td>South Texas Behavioral Health</td>
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<td>Edinburg Regional Medical Center</td>
<td>Mission Regional Medical Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edinburg Children’s Medical Center</td>
<td>Valley Grande Institute*</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Starr County</strong></td>
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<td>Starr County Memorial Hospital</td>
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An estimated 1,200 local, regional, state and federal personnel participated in the exercise series.

A special thank you to TDEM Region 3 Administrator Tony Pena and DDC John O’Valle!
Questions?

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