

# Disaster Readiness and Recovery for Texas

## Program Description

In Hurricane Harvey and other recent natural disasters, many jurisdictions were strained by the complexities of disaster preparedness and long-term recovery.

Better preparation and support from disaster-recovery experts will fast-track recovery and alleviate long-term costs for communities. The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service proposes a program that will improve disaster readiness in Texas and will let the agency respond to emergencies while continuing to provide its educational programs on critical issues statewide.

The proposed program will create six regional teams of AgriLife Extension professionals to provide rapid, precise assessments in case of disaster and implement critical recovery protocols. These Disaster Assessment and Recovery Teams (DARTs) will aid communities with resiliency planning, emergency preparedness, hazard mitigation, and long-term recovery. AgriLife Extension will seek to utilize military veterans with appropriate skill sets and backgrounds in staffing the DARTs.

## Demonstrated Community Need.

### Proven Ability to Help.

The natural disasters of 2017 revealed how much assistance local jurisdictions need with both emergency planning and long-term recovery. AgriLife Extension is uniquely positioned to provide this assistance due to its statewide network of educators, volunteers, and offices serving all 254 Texas counties. The agency can rapidly deploy specialized professionals to the most highly affected areas in natural disasters, and it supports state agencies in emergencies as a member of the Texas Emergency Management Council.

Following Hurricane Harvey and the creation of the Governor's Commission to Rebuild Texas, AgriLife Extension assumed a new, larger role in emergency response and recovery. The agency has responded to the needs of communities across the state affected by wildfires, tornadoes, and hurricanes.

**Exceptional Item Request**

**FY 2020–21**

**\$6.8 Million**

## Objectives

Prepare local jurisdictions for natural disasters and disaster recovery.

## Consequences of not funding:

Jurisdictions will struggle with the complexities of preparing for and recovering from disasters.

Affected communities will take longer to recover and will incur higher costs.



AgriLife Extension can help Texas communities prepare for disasters like Hurricane Harvey and provide expert support in disaster recovery.

## Emergency Preparedness

### Help plan land use.

AgriLife Extension teams will help communities with land-use planning and hazard mitigation plans to submit to Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM).

### Help plan for economic hardships.

Teams will help jurisdictions become more resilient, for example by establishing economic baselines of agricultural production. Economic planning supports rural communities and secures the state's food supply.

### Teach mitigation and recovery.

For elected officials, planners, and the public, Extension personnel will teach workshops on storm water management, risk mitigation, federal reimbursement, sheltering people and animals, evacuation procedures, debris management, and temporary housing, among other topics.

### Collaborate with other agencies.

AgriLife Extension will work with TDEM and Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station to support Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service training efforts on responding to emergencies, identifying future sites for debris management and temporary housing, and establishing pre-storm contracts.

## Emergency Response and Recovery

### Operate shelters.

AgriLife Extension teams will establish and manage points for animal supply, animal sheltering, and animal rescue operations.

### Assess damage.

DARTs will assess agricultural losses and infrastructure damages for reporting to local, state, and federal partners.

### Teach recovery workshops.

Extension agents will host recovery forums and workshops in coordination with state and federal agencies.

### Act as liaisons.

Extension agents will maintain daily contact with local school, municipal, and county officials to help convey information to and from state and federal agencies.

### Provide expert help.

DARTs will serve as a "surge force" of personnel that can deploy into the disaster theater and, among other tasks,

- ▶ help establish FEMA disaster recovery centers and USDA D-SNAP distribution locations,
- ▶ coordinate removal of debris and inspect temporary housing,
- ▶ liaise between landowners and incident command posts,
- ▶ support road and bridge inspections and electricity restoration,
- ▶ help with TDEM hazardous mitigation grant applications, and
- ▶ help with FEMA reimbursement filings.



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Texas A&M AgriLife

What is AgriLife? It's a simple word for a diverse organization. With teaching, research, extension education, laboratory, and forestry facilities throughout Texas, we serve people of all ages and backgrounds. Led by Patrick J. Stover, vice chancellor for agriculture and life sciences, Texas A&M AgriLife includes the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas A&M AgriLife Research, Texas A&M Forest Service, and the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory.