

Regional Strategies For Texas First Responder Preparedness

I. SUMMARY OF REGIONAL STRATEGIES:

The Office of the Governor has requested that the 24 Councils of Government throughout Texas develop a Regional Strategies for Texas First Responders Plan by August 30, 2002. Using guidelines prepared by the Texas Association of Regional Councils, the DETCOG staff developed a plan to respond to the request from the Governor's Office.

Initial objectives include assessing current and future resource needs of first responders relative to strategies, equipment, communications, training and preparedness exercises necessary to combat a Weapon of Mass Destruction or other Mass Casualty Event. This effort prioritizes the region's needs in anticipation of federal funding.

The purpose of this document is to highlight some of the obvious first responder needs of the Deep East Texas region and to lay the groundwork for the possible development of a comprehensive regional response plan. Such a plan would help to ensure the effective mobilization of the region's first responder groups in the wake of a Major Terrorist or other Mass Casualty event. In order to achieve a highly effective response, the region as a whole will have to overcome the following barriers:

1. Communications deficiencies and inoperability. Regional interoperability is being inhibited by inadequate communication equipment and limiting communications procedures. Equipment will have to be updated and procedures will have to be unilaterally accepted and utilized.
2. Lack of Training. Most of the region's emergency service providers lack the training necessary to effectively respond to a Major Terrorist or other Mass Casualty incident.
3. Lack of Exercises. Most of the region's emergency service providers lack the experience of having participated in organized and controlled exercises relevant to responding to a Major Terrorist or other Mass Casualty incident.
4. Inadequacy of Equipment. Most of the region's first responder groups are ill-equipped or under-equipped to deal with large-scale disasters.
5. Limited Availability of HAZMAT Teams. There is only one certified team in the region capable of mitigating an explosive device or dealing with a HAZMAT situation.
6. Lack of coordinated control. The region will have to work toward the development of an organized plan that will allow for the effective and immediate use of the Unified Incident Command role in the event of a widespread disaster.
7. Distance. The region is large with few population centers. The logistics of physically mobilizing multiple responder teams to a disaster site in a timely manner while maintaining adequate protection coverage within each responder's home service area will have to be considered.
8. Local Government Concerns. Concerns over liability and commitment of local funds and resources have heretofore, been obstacles to the development of a region-wide mutual aid agreement.

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9. Lack of Local Resources. No region in the state is in greater need of Federal/State resources; the Deep East Texas region has a poor economy and low tax base, inhibiting the ability to generate funding locally.

This regional strategy targets the following goals as a means of improving the region's emergency preparedness:

1. Plan. This document suggests the development of a comprehensive regional response plan that would involve all the stakeholders in the region's first response system.
2. Communication and Interoperability of Communications. The ability of first responders to effectively communicate among their own first response team and with other first response teams within the region and adjoining regions must be addressed.
3. Train. The region's first responders must be trained to effectively respond to disaster situations. That training should be refreshed and updated on a routine basis.
4. Exercise. The region's first responders must routinely practice their skills in joint exercises to better prepare themselves for dealing with real-life disasters.
5. Equipment. The region's first responders must be properly equipped to provide effective response. This goal includes the provision of the interoperable communications, personal safety, and support equipment.
6. Assess. From the local level up, the region needs to continually assess and re-assess its ability to respond to a Major Terrorist or other Mass Casualty event as a means of improving those capabilities.

This strategy is not intended to supercede existing policies, plans, or procedures. Its mission is to work with these existing assets in order to improve coordination and communication between the various groups involved with the Deep East Texas region's first response system. In so doing, the region will be better prepared to respond to a Major Terrorist or other Mass Casualty event. The central theme of the mission is to enhance protection of life and property and to make the Deep East Texas region a safer place to live.

II. DESCRIPTION OF REGIONAL SITUATION:

The Deep East Texas planning region is a large geographical area, encompassing 12 counties and over 9,906 square miles of geography. There are 43 incorporated cities and 1 Census Designated Place in the region. The planning region borders 4 adjoining planning regions and the State of Louisiana. The region is rural and sparsely populated in most areas, containing large bodies of water and all or part of all 4 national forests in Texas. The 2000 census shows the Deep East Texas region's total population at 358,977 (Attachment D).

The region's first responder community includes over 100 volunteer fire departments, 12 Sheriffs departments, numerous Police Departments, and a variety of public/private/volunteer EMS teams. There are only 2 paid, full-time fire departments (Lufkin and Nacogdoches) in the region. Only 2 of the EMS teams in the region are directly operated by public entities (Lufkin Fire Dept. and Nacogdoches County Hospital District). Most of the region's EMS service is operated by for-profit companies under contract with the various counties.

Most of the region's emergency services (outside of law enforcement) are being provided by volunteers. Most of these volunteer departments are presently ill equipped and inadequately

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trained to deal with Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), Mass Casualty, or other large-scale disaster.

Until recently, most of the region's first responder departments operated under informal mutual aid arrangements. These agreements were essentially handshake compacts based on practicality. If a community needs help in responding to a fire, medical emergency or other disaster, the natural response for most Deep East Texas region's entities has been to send help, whether or not they are called out. Recently, there have been efforts to implement formalized mutual aid agreements among most of the region's entities. The willingness to implement such formalized agreements is evident, and only technical assistance should be required to implement such arrangements for all entities in a short period of time.

There are 12 hospitals operating in the 12-county area, 3 of the region's counties have no hospital. There are insufficient licensed beds available between these 12 facilities to serve even a miniscule percentage of the total regional population at any one time. The Lufkin/Nacogdoches medical facilities serve as a regional medical center for much of the region, while many residents in outlying areas routinely receive major medical care in Houston, Beaumont, Tyler, and Shreveport.

A. The Region's Major First Responder Needs in the Event of a Terrorist or other Mass Casualty Event

1. To develop sound response plans. The region as a whole needs to work toward the development of a comprehensive response plan(s) for terrorist or other Mass Casualty incidents. The plan(s) needs to work in conjunction with local plans and the plans being developed by neighboring planning regions and bordering the State of Louisiana. The regional response plan(s) will have to be updated periodically.
2. To improve emergency communications infrastructure and interoperability of communications equipment, including local warning systems and redundancy.
3. To obtain more pertinent training. The region's first responders need training to respond more effectively to terrorist incidents and work more safely in contaminated environments.
4. To perpetuate training skills through regular exercises. The region's first responders need to practice and refine the response plan(s) noted above through a regular exercise program that will improve response capabilities, practice mutual aid, and evaluate improvements and deficiencies in response operations.
5. To secure more support equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE). In general, the region needs to increase its inventory of first responder equipment. That equipment needs to be standardized, practical, and compatible to work in all possible circumstances.
6. To coordinate planning and funding activities. Currently, there are a variety of state/federal agencies involved with emergency preparedness planning. These concurrent efforts seem to be related yet detached. Likewise, a number of federal agencies are or will be providing resources to support the implementation of these concurrent plans. For the benefit of this region, these concurrent planning efforts need to be channeled through a single point of contact at the state and regional level.

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7. To strategically locate specialized teams (HAZMAT, Urban Search and Rescue, Bomb Squad, Trauma EMS, Dive Teams and Water Rescue, etc.) in multiple areas of the region.

Any federal/state funding provided should be distributed in a coordinated manner to reduce confusion at the local level, avoid duplicative expenditures, and to optimize the beneficial impact of the funding on the region's first responder system.

B. Unique First Responder Issues Facing the Deep East Texas region

The Deep East Texas region, like many other regions, contains nine of the asset/targets identified by the FBI: energy, oil and gas, water, telecommunications, banking and financial institutions, transportation, emergency services, continuity of government, and other (facilities).

The following is a partial list of issues that may be considered unique areas of concern for the region's first responder community:

1. The large number of highway corridors coming through the region (US Hwy 59, US Hwy 69, US Hwy 96, US Hwy 190, US Hwy 259, US Hwy 287, Texas Hwy 21, Texas Hwy 62, Texas Hwy 87, Texas Hwy 103 and others). These corridors would serve as evacuation routes for residents fleeing the population centers of the four adjoining planning regions (Beaumont, Houston, Tyler, Bryan-College Station, Shreveport, etc). Trucks commonly utilize these corridors for hauling a wide variety of potentially dangerous materials. In addition, the corridors provide relatively unchecked access to and from the region for would be terrorists.
2. Area Dams and Reservoirs. The largest surface water reservoirs in Texas are in the Deep East Texas region. These reservoirs could be targets for terrorist activity either as a means of contaminating a public drinking water supply source or as a means of causing widespread destruction through the breaching of a dam.
3. National Forests/Wildfires. All 4 National Forests located in Texas are either wholly or partially located in the Deep East Texas region. Wildfires are a threat in the region during any season of the year but most particularly, during the drought-prone summer months. A well-planned arsonist attack involving any or all of these 4 national forests could have catastrophic impacts upon the region.
4. Poultry and Food Production Facilities. The Deep East Texas region is a major grower of poultry products and contains several major poultry processing facilities. Bacterial elements delivered through feeding or processing of poultry could have health implications throughout the country.
5. Prison Units. There are 7 state prisons in the region, including the Polunsky Unit in Polk County, which houses Texas' death row inmates. In addition, there are 2 privately managed correctional facilities in the region. Breaches in security for any reason, including terrorist operations, could have major consequences for the region.
6. Pipelines. There are miles pipelines throughout the region, many under or over major water sources.
7. Fuel Farms. There is a 3 million gallon gasoline storage facility located in the region.
8. Rail. The region contains many miles of rail used to deliver numerous materials.

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9. Lack of NWS Radar. The region does not have local NWS radar to provide early accurate early warning of severe weather.
10. Vital Industry. <text deleted> is located in the region. Those industries and others could be likely targets of terrorists.
11. Large Numbers of People in Small Areas. <text deleted> , and other facilities may have thousands of people in a small area.

C. Estimated Number of Deep East Texas region Local Governments Without a DEM-Approved Local Emergency Preparedness Plan

According to DEM records, the following local governments operate under an approved Local Emergency Management Plan: **Houston County** (and all Cities); **Jasper County** (and all Cities); **San Jacinto County** (and all Cities); **Polk County** (and all Cities); **Shelby County** (and all Cities); **Trinity County** (and all Cities); and the **City of Nacogdoches**.

The status of all other local governments is as follows:

Angelina County: Angelina County (and all Cites) either have or shortly will be providing DEM with a current, updated Local Emergency Plan.

Nacogdoches County: Nacogdoches County (and all Cites except the City of Nacogdoches) either have or shortly will be providing DEM with a current, updated Local Emergency Plan.

Newton County: Newton County is working with Jasper County to craft an agreement that will allow Newton County (and all Cities) to attach their entities to the approved Jasper County plan.

Sabine County: Sabine County is working with Jasper County to craft an agreement that will allow Sabine County (and all Cities) to attach their entities to the approved Jasper County plan.

San Augustine County: San Augustine County is working with Shelby County to craft an agreement that will allow San Augustine County (and all Cities) to attach their entities to the approved Shelby County plan.

Tyler County: Tyler County (and all Cites) either have or shortly will be providing DEM with a current, updated Local Emergency Plan.

Each entity is aware that having an approved DEM Emergency Management Plan is a requirement for participating in the Texas First Responder Preparedness Plan. There is a **high level of confidence** that all entities in the Deep East Texas region will have a DEM-approved Emergency Management Plan in place prior to the availability of TFRPP funds. Further, if a comprehensive regional response plan is to be developed, it will only be effective if it is working in conjunction with sound local plans.

D. Participants in the Region's First Responder Preparedness Activities to Date

Essentially, each of the first responder groups in the region has been given the opportunity to provide input into the development of this regional strategy document. The process began in

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June 2002 when the DETCOG surveyed the entire region for the purpose of developing a current database of the emergency service providers in the region.

Later in June 2002, the DETCOG President acted to change the name of the existing COG advisory committee with the most relevant emergency planning expertise from the Deep East Texas Hurricane Advisory Task Force to the Deep East Texas Emergency Preparedness Task Force (Appendix B). Additional membership was appointed to assure that each of the 12 counties and the 2 largest cities in the region (Lufkin and Nacogdoches) were represented on the Task Force by their Emergency Management Director and/or Emergency Management Coordinator.

In order to cover such a vast geographic area, the DETCOG President appointed Co-chairs and Co-Vice Chairs from different areas of the region to serve as officers of the Task Force. The officers of the Task Force agreed to serve as coordinators of the local meetings and assessment process for each county. The officers along with DETCOG staff, conducted two region-wide meetings to provide information and seek input from the Deep East Texas region's various first responder groups, Chief Elected Officials, and other interested parties. In addition, a series of county-level meetings was conducted by the officers of the Task Force and/or designated DETCOG staff to conduct county-level preparedness and needs assessments.

Two workgroup sessions were held to allow the Taskforce officers to provide input in setting needs priorities for this plan document to the DETCOG staff. Upon completion of the document, it was presented to the full Deep East Texas Emergency Preparedness Task Force for review, comment, and approval. Finally, the plan document was presented to the DETCOG Executive Committee for final approval prior to submitting the document to the Office of the Governor. The Executive Committee passed a resolution adopting the Regional Strategies and agreeing to undertake the Council of Governments' roles and responsibilities for Texas First Responder Preparedness (Appendix A) on August 29, 2002.

III. STRATEGIES FOR USE OF FEDERAL, STATE, REGIONAL AND LOCAL RESOURCES (FY 2003 – 2004):

A. Equipment

1. Existing Status of Equipment Available for Responding to a Major Terrorist or other Mass Casualty Event in the Region

This equipment status evaluation is, at this time, fairly extensive but not complete. In order to properly evaluate the status of the equipment available in the region to respond to a Major Terrorist or Mass Casualty event, the following steps will have to be taken.

- a. Complete the region-wide survey, already underway, to identify the types, number and condition of fire, rescue, medical aid, and mitigation/remediation equipment currently owned by all of the region's fire, EMS, and law enforcement agencies.
- b. Evaluate the types of fire, rescue, medical aid, and mitigation/remediation that could be used to provide effective response to the types of terrorist and mass casualty events most likely to occur in the region.

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- c. Determine what additional equipment would be needed by each department in order to create a basic departmental level of response equipment; standardized and compatible to work with other similar responder groups throughout the region.
 - d. Determine what types of unique equipment would be needed to respond to terrorist or mass casualty events and decide how that equipment should be strategically placed within the region's first responder system to afford rapid access in a disaster situation.
 - e. Complete an objective assessment to determine where to locate and maintain specialized equipment that can best serve multiple jurisdictions in the region.
2. Equipment Deficiencies to Respond to a Major Terrorist or other Mass Casualty Event in the Region

Based on the DETCOG surveys of the regional fire, EMS, and law enforcement, the needs of the region's first responder groups are numerous and widespread. The equipment needs of the region's first responders can be generalized as follows:

- Interoperable Communications Equipment
- Radios, Scanners, Laptops
- Mobile Command Centers
- Personal Protective Equipment
- General Protective Supplies
- Explosive Device Mitigation/Remediation Equipment
- WMD Technical Rescue Equipment
- Detection Equipment
- Decontamination Equipment
- Portable Decontamination Equipment
- General Support Equipment
- Physical Security Enhancement Equipment
- Self Contained Breathing Apparatus
- Air Cascade Motorized Apparatus
- Emergency Power Generation Systems
- Emergency Operations Center(s)
- EMS Equipment and Supplies

** This list does not include every specific equipment need mentioned by first responders during the initial assessment process*

3. The Region's Strategies and Priorities for Alleviating Equipment Deficiencies to Respond to a Major Terrorist or Mass Casualty Event

The regional strategy for alleviating the Deep East Texas region's terrorist or mass casualty event equipment needs has been broken down into the following prioritized steps.

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- a. Complete the equipment analyses described under Section III, Part A (1) above to accurately determine the extent of the region's equipment deficiencies.
- b. Consider how and who should maintain the equipment to ensure that it will be standing at the ready when needed.
- c. Refine a process for equitably prioritizing how the identified deficiencies will be addressed in a manner that will achieve the greatest good over the shortest period of time.
- d. Secure state and/or federal funding needed to begin filling the identified deficiencies.
- e. Establish a methodology for filling the region's equipment needs in a deliberate, focused manner, ensuring that unique equipment items are strategically placed over time to effectively serve the widest possible area.

B. Communications and Interoperable Communication Equipment

1. The Region's Status in Regard to Communications Interoperability in the event of a Major Terrorist or other Mass Casualty Incident

Currently, due to the wide variety of communication equipment being used, it is not possible for the region's first responders to effectively interface in order to achieve end-to-end communication region-wide. Many of the region's volunteer departments rely on antiquated radios with limited channel and frequency capabilities. Often times, volunteers from the same department find it difficult to communicate with each other much less with responders from other departments.

The region's interoperability barriers are not totally equipment-based. To further promote interoperability, all emergency services providers in the region need to be encouraged to work together and collaboratively use existing emergency communications frequencies and channels during disaster situations. Achieving uniform communications interoperability is the highest priority goal for the region as it applies to this First Responder Preparedness initiative. The response capabilities of the region's first responders will continue to be hampered until such time that reliable and consistent region-wide communicability can be assured.

2. The Region's Strategy and Priority Needs for Interoperable Communication Systems and Equipment to Facilitate Effective Response to a Major Terrorist or other Mass Casualty Event

Goals:

The establishment of interoperability in intra- and inter-state communications systems and the development of communication protocols that will maximize the protection of the region's cities, counties, and the surrounding area, regardless of political or geographic boundaries.

Objectives:

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- a. Establish a working group representing the region's first responder groups to lead the development of this regional system and system use protocols.
 - b. Invite representatives from the 4 surrounding planning regions and the State of Louisiana to participate in the process.
 - c. Secure state/federal/local resources necessary to support the design of a region-wide interoperable communications system.
 - d. Engage the services of a qualified consultant who can assist the working group in identifying the interoperable systems needs of the region.
 - e. Design the infrastructure necessary to support a region-wide interoperable system (preferably one that will inter-lock with neighboring regions and surrounding and the State of Louisiana).
 - f. Develop agreements between the various participating groups to facilitate the Implementation and use of the system.
 - g. Develop basic standards for the communications equipment to be used by the region's first responders in accessing the system and develop agreements for how that equipment will be used in emergency situations.
 - h. Secure state/federal/local resources necessary to support the implementation of the region-wide interoperable communications system.
3. The Region's Strategy and Priority Needs for Assuring 9-1-1 Redundancy and Operability

According to the State Commission on Emergency Communications, Phase I Wireless service has now been deployed throughout the entire Deep East Texas region. The Phase II implementation work will be undertaken in the not too distant future.

GOAL:

To build upon DETCOG's efforts to implement Phase I E9-1-1 wireless service in the Deep East Texas region with the deployment of a reliable, complimentary wireless public safety communications system thereby providing a higher level of public safety at all times, including during times of exigency.

OBJECTIVES:

- a. To support DETCOG's continuing efforts to implement a regional wireless E9-1-1 system in conformance with HB1983.
 - b. To consider DETCOG's efforts and the goals of HB1983 when designing the region-wide public safety communications system to ensure that it can network and be interoperable with the E9-1-1 system.
 - c. To optimize enabling technologies and open architecture standards, consistent with those being used by E9-1-1, to ensure that interoperability approaches can be designed and implemented.
4. Special Communications issues to be considered.

Other issues that should be considered within these communication strategies:

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- a. Consider developing a communications structure that will allow for the effective receipt and dissemination of information through the Homeland Security System when it is enacted.
- b. Consider the implementation of Reverse 9-1-1 throughout the 12-county Deep East Texas region through CSEC/DETCOG E9-1-1 program to enhance local warning capabilities.
- c. Support the implementation of Network Redundancy of Selective Routing throughout the 12-county Deep East Texas region through CSEC/DETCOG E9-1-1 program.
- d. Consider developing a communications structure that will be able to support the possible implementation of a Regional Incident Command and Communications system.
- e. Consider developing a communications structure that will allow for the interoperable flow of all medium of communications including voice, data, and imagery.
- f. Enhancing training and professional development opportunities for the region's dispatchers/9-1-1 telecommunicators. The dispatchers are the first link to most emergency responses.

C. Mutual Aid Agreements

1. The Status of the Region's Mutual Aid Agreements

As previously mentioned, mutual aid in the region has most commonly been provided on an informal basis. However, several entities have already entered into formal mutual aid agreements with all cities within their respective county and with each adjoining county.

Work is underway to assure that each city in the Deep East Texas region has entered into a mutual aid agreements with their respective counties and that each county has entered into a mutual aid agreement with all adjoining counties.

Each entity is aware that having sound and inter-locking mutual aid agreements is a requirement for participating in the Texas First Responder Preparedness Plan. There is a *high level of confidence* that all entities in the Deep East Texas region will have sound and inter-locking mutual aid agreements in place prior to the availability of TFRPP funds. Further, if a comprehensive regional response plan is to be developed, it will only be effective if it is working in conjunction with sound and inter-locking mutual aid agreements in place

2. Status of the Development and Adoption of a Regional Mutual Aid Agreement

The intent of this regional strategy is not to impinge upon effective agreements that are already in place in the Deep East Texas region or with those now being put into place, but to build upon and strengthen those arrangements. Much like the strategy for developing an interlocking, interoperable public safety communications system, the region's mutual aid agreements should also be comprehensive and interlocking.

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DETCOG will seek assistance from the Texas Attorney Generals Office to develop and Implement a Regional Mutual Aid Agreement. Since the Deep East Texas region borders the State of Louisiana, that agreement may have to extend beyond regional boundaries.

3. Identified Needs for Revising and Improving Local Mutual Aid Agreements to Respond to a Major Terrorist or other Mass Casualty Event

The need has been identified, some of the issues that have to be considered:

- a. A determination needs to be made on how or if the existing agreements can be integrated in with a regional blanket agreement.
- b. A determination needs to be made as to which groups should participate in a region-wide mutual aid agreement. Ostensibly, at times, it may be necessary to call upon a widely diverse group that could include fire, law enforcement, medical and health, communications, transportation services and public works facilities to properly effect evacuation, rescue, and relief activities.
- c. A determination needs to be made as to how liabilities for “negligent or tortuous acts” of first responders can be equitably apportioned between the various participating parties.
- d. A determination needs to be made on how a regional mutual aid agreement can be used to resolve some of the existing communications interoperability issues.
- e. A determination needs to be made on how local departments, particularly in cases of state or federally declared disasters, can receive reimbursement for response-related expenses.
- f. A determination needs to be made on how the agreement could cover all first responder groups in the region including for-profit and non-profit groups.
- g. A determination needs to be made on how and who should activate the agreement in time of Major Terrorist or other Mass Casualty event.

4. Strategies and Priorities for Addressing any Deficiencies in Mutual Aid Coverage in the event of a Major Terrorist or other Mass Casualty incident

Achieving this priority goal will take some time to first develop and then promote universal acceptance of the agreement. To be effective, most, if not all of the region’s emergency services providers would have to participate in the agreement.

GOAL:

To develop a universally accepted, region-wide mutual aid compact that will facilitate an Immediate response to Major Terrorist or other Mass Casualty events by various responder groups from multiple jurisdictions in an effective and coordinated manner.

OBJECTIVES:

- a. Create a standing committee at least, for the purpose of achieving this goal, if not also for the various other goals already highlighted in this document, to oversee the development and implementation of an area-wide mutual aid compact.
- b. Invite representatives from surrounding regions and the State of Louisiana to

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participate in the development of the agreement.

- c. Secure state/federal/local resources necessary to support the development of the agreement.
 - d. Request assistance from the Texas Attorney Generals office to draft a sound, workable Regional Mutual Aid Agreement.
 - e. Distribute a draft copy of the area-wide mutual aid compact to all potentially affected parties within the coverage area.
 - f. Begin the process of selling the agreement; most likely on a jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction basis.
 - g. Maintain the agreement once accepted by all affected parties in the coverage area.
5. Special Regional Mutual Aid Agreement Issues

Given the Deep East Texas region's location adjoining the State of Louisiana, it may become necessary for the state to assist with the development of a multi-state mutual aid agreement since potentially, the region's agreement could be exercised across state lines.

D. Training for First Responders

1. Status of the Training for First Response to a Major Terrorist or other Mass Casualty Event in the Region

Most of the region's emergency service providers rely on volunteers. Most of these volunteers have not received relevant training in this area.

It is fair to say that at this point in time, the need for first responder training in the Deep East Texas region is critical and widespread.

2. State, Regional and Other Training Resources to be Accessed to Address Training Deficiencies

There are a number of local, regional, state and federal agencies available capable of facilitating the needed training. The list includes but is not limited to the following:

Angelina College (Police Academy, Fire Academy, EMS, Distance Learning facilities)

Stephen F. Austin State University (Distance Learning facilities)

Lamar University

Texas Municipal League

Texas Association of Counties

Texas Department of Health

Texas Department of Public Safety

Texas Division of Emergency Management

Texas Engineering Extension Service

Texas Forest Service

3. Region's Strategies and Priorities for Addressing Training Needs

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GOAL:

To establish an on-going program that encourages the region's first responder groups to obtain and maintain relevant training on responding to a Major Terrorist or other Mass Casualty event.

OBJECTIVES:

- a. To develop and maintain at the regional level a complete listing of currently available training opportunities for the Deep East Texas region's various first responder groups.
- b. To keep the region's first responder groups aware of when the training courses will be held.
- c. To develop a means of supporting the costs of such training through local, state, and federal sources.
- d. To encourage existing competent training service providers to widen their curriculum to include more courses on Emergency Preparedness-related topics.
- e. To encourage state-level associations to provide more relevant training for their membership.
- f. To assist in the development of a standardized curriculum of training, pertinent to the various responder groups in the region, that could be offered on a reoccurring basis.

4. Special Regional Training Needs

Public education has been a key component of the state's 9-1-1 implementation plan. Some public education or awareness programs could also prove beneficial to the implementation of a Regional First Responder initiative.

E. **Regional First Responder Exercises**

1. Region's Priority Needs for First Responder Exercises

Local and regional exercises will be necessary in order to perpetuate a consistently high level of preparedness, improve response actions in times of actual crisis, and in the long run, help to minimize the loss of life resulting from a Mass Terrorist or other Mass Casualty event.

The region needs to routinely test and assess its ability to respond to disaster situations in order to enhance performance under fire.

In order to facilitate an ongoing program of exercise, a central point of contact should be designated to set-up and coordinate the simulations.

2. State, Regional, and Other Resources to be Accessed for Exercises

Sources of support for local and regional exercises may include but are not limited to the following.

- a. Local chapters of the Salvation Army and American Red Cross to provide coordination assistance in the conduct of exercises
- b. The Division of Emergency Management for technical assistance and possible funding support

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- c. The Texas Department of Health for technical assistance and possible funding support
 - d. Federal Emergency Management Administration with funding support available through the First Responder Grants program
 - e. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Domestic Preparedness through the State and Local Domestic Preparedness Exercise Program
 - f. The Department of Defense with funding support available through the Nunn-Lugar-Domenici (NLD) Domestic Preparedness Program (DPP)
3. Region's Strategies and Priorities for Organizing First Responder Exercises

GOAL:

To establish and maintain a productive regional exercise program that will enable the Deep East Texas region's first responders to continually increase their proficiency in responding to Major Terrorist or other Mass Casualty events.

OBJECTIVES:

- a. To designate a regional single point of contact to coordinate regional exercise activities.
 - b. To identify all the partners needed to develop a comprehensive program of exercise.
 - c. To engage the identified partners in the development of an exercise series comprised of tabletop exercises, functional communications and coordination drills and field exercises.
 - d. To obtain a commitment from the identified partners regarding their continued participation in the regional exercise program.
 - e. To develop a method by which the exercises can be evaluated.
 - f. To obtain a commitment from the region's first responders group to participate in the regional exercise program.
 - g. To secure state/federal/local resources necessary to support an ongoing regional exercise program in the Deep East Texas region.
4. Special Regional Needs regarding First Responder Exercises

Most of the region's emergency services are being provided by local volunteers. Since they are not paid professionals, their participation in this regional exercise program may be in conflict with their normal jobs. To a certain extent, this conflict can be alleviated by scheduling weekend exercises. However, this is an important factor to note since these individuals are already generously giving of their time to provide local emergency services.

F. Interlocking Plans With Surrounding Regions (Appendix C)

1. Describe any Inter-regional Issues that have been identified

Brazos Valley Council of Governments (BVCOG)

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- Highway Corridor
- BVCOG residents will evacuate to the east in the event of a terrorist or mass casualty event in the BVCOG region.
- DETCOG residents will evacuate to the west in the event of a terrorist or mass casualty event in the DETCOG region.

East Texas Council of Governments (ETCOG)

- Highway Corridor
- ETCOG residents will evacuate to the south in the event of a terrorist or mass casualty event in the ETCOG region.
- DETCOG residents will evacuate to the north in the event of a terrorist or mass casualty event in the DETCOG region.

Houston-Galveston Area Council (HGAC)

- Highway Corridor
- HGAC residents will evacuate to the north in the event of a terrorist or mass casualty event in HGAC region.
- DETCOG residents will evacuate to the south in the event of a terrorist or mass casualty event in the DETCOG region.

South East Texas Regional Planning Commission (SETRPC)

- Highway Corridor
- SETRPC residents will evacuate to the north in the event of a terrorist or mass casualty event in SETRPC region.
- DETCOG residents will evacuate to the south in the event of a terrorist or mass casualty event in DETCOG region.

2. Describe the Status of Inter-regional Collaboration

DETCOG has identified the need for and benefit of establishing an Inter-regional Mutual Aid Agreements with the BVCOG, ETCOG, HGAC, and SETRPC.

3. Region's Strategies and Priorities for Addressing Inter-regional Collaboration

Establishing an Inter-regional Mutual Aid Agreement with BVCOG, ETCOG, HGAC, and SETRPC to establish a protocol in the event of an evacuation or the need for mass medical attention.

Establishing an Inter-regional Mutual Aid Agreement with BVCOG, ETCOG, HGAC, and SETRPC to establish a protocol for addressing a terrorist/mass casualty event threatening mutual community issues.

4. Special Inter-regional Issues to be Addressed in the Deep East Texas region

The eastern portion of the region shares a border with the State of Louisiana.

Regional Strategies For Texas First Responder Preparedness

State of Louisiana

- Highway Corridor
- Louisiana residents will evacuate to the west in the event of a terrorist or mass casualty event in western Louisiana.
- DETCOG residents will evacuate to the east in the event of a terrorist or mass casualty event in DETCOG region.

IV. Other Issues that the Region Plans to Address

This strategy only begins to address the immediate needs of the region's fire, EMS, and law enforcement first responders. There are clearly other first responder groups in the region that should be considered in any comprehensive regional response plan including, but not limited to:

- Regional medical facilities and personnel
- Crisis Counseling
- Public works
- Utilities
- Transportation
- Industry
- Agriculture
- Water Districts or Authorities
- Communications Infrastructure including additional wireless towers in underserved areas
- Media
- Emergency Shelter providers
- Public Schools
- At Risk Population (disabled, speech and hearing impaired, aging)

V. Appendices

- A. Resolution of Governing Body
- B. Emergency Preparedness Task Force
- C. County Population and Square Miles
- D. Inter-locking Region Map