PCC Meeting

April 15, 2024, from 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm

In-Person and Via TEAMs

# Meeting Minutes and Notes

# **Attendance**:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Representatives** | | **Agency/Division/Program** |
| John Henderson | Texas Organization of Rural and Community Hospitals (TORCH) | | |
| Michelle Havelka | Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) | | |
| Eduardo “Eddie” Olivarez | Representative from an Urban Local Health Department | | |
| Chief James Elliot | Texas Department of Emergency Management (TDEM) | | |
| Angela Clendenin | University or Health Science Center | | |
| Jeff Hoogheem | DSHS/RLHO/CHEPR Director | | |
| Dana Birnberg | DSHS/RLHO/CHEPR PMU Director | | |
| Genny Lewis Ford | Texas Association of Regional Councils (TARC) | | |
| Bryan Mares | National Association of Social Workers/Texas Chapter | | |
| Serena Bumpus | Texas Nurses Association (TNA) | | |
| Aimee Wong | DSHS/RLHO/CHEPR PMU | | |
| Stephanie Duke | Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) | | |
| Carlos Plasencia | DSHS Region 6/5S, Regional Medical Director | | |
| Eric Epley | Governor’s EMS and Trauma Advisory Council (GETAC) | | |

# Discussion Item #1 Beginning Remarks

* Welcome and introductions

# Discussion Item #2 – PCC Business by Ginny Lewis Ford

## Quorum

* Motion to approve January 30, 2024, meeting minutes. Meeting minutes approved.
* The next meetings will be July 15th and October 21st, 2024, 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm, both in person in M-100. More information and calendar holds will be sent via email.

**Questions/Discussion:**

### None

# Discussion Item #3 – DSHS Update

## EMS Update, by Joe Schmider, State EMS Director, DSHS

* Staffing shortage continues to be an issue for EMS Providers and Hospitals throughout Texas and the Nation. Senate Bill 8 (SB.8) provides 21.7 million dollars for EMS Recruitment and Retention project as well as funding for EMS scholarships in rural and underserved areas of Texas. DSHS partnered with Regional Advisory Councils (RACs), EMS Education programs, and EMS Providers to provide scholarships for candidates. This project is making progress throughout Texas:
  + New Statewide Career website: <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/team-texas-ems>
  + Currently, 2,473 scholarships have been processed, totaling $14.7 million.
  + As of 3/25/2024 there are 7,478 more certified EMS personnel than there were in 2022.
  + EMS Recruitment campaign- material was developed and provided to each of the Regional Advisory Councils.
* Texas EMS Registry system upgraded to V3.5 on Nov. 20, 2023. For any questions regarding EMS and Trauma registry submissions, please contact the Registry Operations Support Team at [injury.web@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:injury.web@dshs.texas.gov)
* Texas EMS Conference will be in Ft Worth, November 24-27, 2024. More info available at: <https://texasemsconference.com>
* The next Governors EMS and Trauma Advisory Council (GETAC) meeting will be June 12-14, 2024, in Austin at the Double Tree Hotel. More info available at: <https://dshs.texas.gov/emstraumasystems/governor.shtm>
* GETAC has developed, a “Whole Blood Task Force” led by Eric Epley, Executive Director for South Texas Regional Advisory Council (STRAC). The mission of this task force is to develop a statewide pre-hospital whole blood program. More information and details will be available at future meetings.

## ****Questions/Discussion:****

### Are there approved EMS apprenticeship programs in Texas?

* Working very closely with the Workforce Commission on getting the word out there, especially in the role frontier areas of Texas.
* A lot of the bigger employers of the EMS pay for you to get your education. However, will bring up the apprenticeship program in future meetings with the Workforce Commission.

Can you confirm the dates of the conference in Fort Worth?

November 24-27, 2024. More info available at: <https://texasemsconference.com>

We want to know more about those vocational programs and also the internship programs, and if there's any models, we can replicate out there?  
For the next meeting, can provide a little PowerPoint showing the commercials and related items.

More of a comment but wanted to thank you for including South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley, specifically on the advertising and some of the training that took place.

## PH Region Update by Dr. Carlos Plasencia, Region 6/5S Regional

## Medical Director, DSHS

* COVID-19 cases have significantly decreased in TX while JN.1 remains the leading variant. Flu and RSV are down as well.
* HPAI in Texas Panhandle in Cattle- H5N1 is the variant, which is most likely introduced by wild birds.
  + Provided timeline.
  + We haven't had any human-to-human transmission that we know of, but we're keeping a close eye.
* There is an MPOX outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
  + It has high mortality and we have not yet seen it outside of the Democratic Republic of Congo, but we're watching it very closely.
* Highlighted the great work being done by all the public health regions.
  + Especially region 1 for not only dealing with the cows getting sick and the first human case, but they were also dealing with the wildfires.

# Discussion Item #3 – Water 101, by Jeff Hoogheem, Director of DSHS Center for Health Emergency Preparedness and Response

* Discussion to understand what the issues are and who has some authorities in Texas and where those authorities are.
* Recently, during the South Texas All Hazards Conference, a tabletop exercise was conducted that dealt specifically with dialysis centers and with 1000 centers and home health care agencies.
  + Focus was on the water shortage or the potential of water shortage this coming summer instead of the rest of this year.
  + Also discussed having these dialysis centers start having prepositioned contracts with tanker trucks that have purified water that have the capacity for the filtration systems in the dialysis centers.
  + Also discussed having the capacity to connect alternate water sources to the main water source of the building where the dialysis centers are.
* Eddie Olivarez: Representative from an Urban Local Health Department (Hidalgo County):
  + County judge just declared an emergency dealing with drought.
    - This declaration ensures there will be support for any federal or state assigned/requested resources supporting our efforts in dealing with drought.
  + Hidalgo County reviewed the following with local fire departments and the Firefighters association:
    - How to handle some of the larger wildland fires and grass fires
    - How mechanized equipment could be used to help extinguish and limit those fires so that not as much water is used
  + The sugar mill in the Rio Grande Valley that has been there for nearly over 100 years recently had to shut down due to lack of water.
  + There needs to be a lot more effort by this Council/Committee, working hand in hand with different state agencies that are represented on the PCC to highlight and formulate a very detailed water shortage plan, be it through the Hospital Association, Nurse Association, Medical Association, or any of the people that are on this Council.
  + TDEM has a Drought Preparedness Council, maybe if we could get them on the next meeting and get an update on what they're up to in order to dovetail into PCC.
  + Another thing is we might get the Water Development Board because they're doing drought planning, and they have a preparedness division just like other agencies. Figure out ways the PCC could engage or ensure they know our perspective.

**Questions/Discussion:**

* None

# Discussion Item #4 – Congenital Syphilis (CS), by Jessica Del Toro – HIV/STD, DSHS

* **Provided case counts in Texas.**
* **Provided comparison of Texas rates vs National rates.**
* **Provided information related to treatment adequacy among women delivering an infant with CS.**
* **Discussed** reasons for treatment inadequacy among mothers.
* **Discussed DSHS activities for CS in Texas, including efforts to decrease CS.**

## ****Questions/Discussion:****

Do you all track and have numbers for the birth defects that result from a positive syphilis, congenital syphilis birth or how that transcends into the later life of a child?

Currently, we are working to look specifically at those analyses. The majority of our congenital syphilis cases do not show any signs and symptoms at the time of delivery. However, that is an analysis that we are working to do to look at the long-term impacts of our congenital syphilis cases.

# Discussion Item #5 – Emerging Threats, by James Elliot (TDEM)

## Discussion item 1

* Discussed what a Mumbai Style Attack is.
  + Near-simultaneous coordinated attacks involving multiple attackers and multiple targets.
* Discussed why this is an Emerging Threat and provided several recent examples.
* Discussed What CCTA Risk Factors Apply to Texas.
* Provided several preparedness considerations related to this emerging threat.
* Informed of what we need to consider as a Preparedness Community.

## ****Questions/Discussion:****

The most common scenario seems to be Ballistics and explosives, but what about chemicals or radiation and others?

As seen in the UK, anything that can be leveraged to facilitate an attack, so anything that can ultimately be a terror tool should be on the table. It's important in a larger community of Preparedness professionals that we have a good understanding of what some of those safeguards are, what some of the access and the accessibility of harmful agents are like that.

# Discussion Item #6- Updates/Information Sharing from PCC members

**Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM)**

Jim Elliot-

* The Texas Emergency Management Conference will be held at the Fort Worth Convention Center on May 28th through 31st.

## Texas Medical Association (TMA):

Dr. David Fleeger –

* We are using the opportunity of measles outbreaks to get education out and try to push immunizations.

**Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ)**

Michelle Havelka-

* Working everything from wildfires, to floods, to the avian flu.
* Also working on carcass disposal with partners.
* Preparing the force for hurricane season.
* Environmental trade fair is coming up May 14-15, 2024, at the Austin Convention Center <https://www.tceq.texas.gov/p2/events/etfc>

**Texas Organization of Rural and Community Hospitals (TORCH)**

John Henderson –

* Rural hospitals are hanging in there.
* Dealing with the Panhandle wildfires in February.
  + Rural hospitals, clinics, and nursing home communities had to evacuate, but they were back and operational the following day.
  + Counted 14 rural hospital staff that lost their homes to those fires.

Questioned: Will the federal threshold for assistance be met?

* Response: There's going to be a lot of folks that are working to assess the terms of the available aid. There's a great amount of variability with some of what aid looks like, whether it's personal property when we have critical infrastructure, but I think it's going to be very complex.

**University or Health Science Center**

Angela Clendenin-

* Conducted the annual Texas A&M Health Sciences Center disaster day on March 1st and that was prefaced by the PRIMR Conference which was attended by over 100 people and over 40 different presentations which were very well received.
* Recently, the Texas Interprofessional Education Consortium held their annual meeting and it was a gathering of all of the Health Science centers that do interprofessional education between medical dentistry, occupational therapy, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, public health and all of them were interested in moving forward with interprofessional education training using disaster scenarios to improve our multiple disciplines, ability to communicate through teamwork and lead in times of disaster.

**Governor’s EMS and Trauma Advisory Council (GETAC)**

Eric Epley-

* On the EMTF front, we had wildland fire, medical resources that were in the Panhandle for all those fires. Also, there was other severe weather that occurred as well.
* Attended the A&M disaster day and set up the field hospital there for the participants to be able to take a look and participate in that.
* Also doing a ton of training courses between now and June 1st as we prepare for hurricane season, and we'll of course be at the TDEM conference with all the display set up. If you want to check out what the field hospital or an AMBUS looks like, and you're at the TDEM conference, feel free to stop by.
* Beginning the first rounds of an advisory group for the Radiological Response unit capability and we'll probably have more after the first advisory group meeting to brief this group on.
* Continue to push on more deployment of Pulsara, our patient tracking and the management tool, and the Texas EMS wristband in the adoption of that.
* Regarding GETAC, Dr Tyroch appointed me to be the chair of the prehospital Whole Blood Task Force and we have met once. We got over 168 people, virtually to that first meeting and we're looking forward to that group help setting the goal of a unit of whole blood and every single county in Texas available to every Texan.

**Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD)**

Stephanie Duke-

* Currently responding still to the Panhandle wildfires and now the storms from last week in East Texas.
  + Our volunteer organizations are busy feeding people, housing people, and then helping support the emergency sheltering operations.
* Looking at ways to better do preparedness activities. So anytime anybody has some opportunity or things they'd like us to promote with our member organizations to get out to the Community as well, please let us know.

# Closing Remarks and Topics for Next Meeting

* Thank you to all for participating
* Reminder to please provide suggestions for content in future meetings.