



## Real-World Incident After-Action Report/Improvement Plan Gillespie County/City of Fredericksburg Winter Storm 2021

The After-Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) aligns objectives with preparedness doctrine to include the National Preparedness Goal and related frameworks and EMPG guidance.



## Incident Overview

<b>Real-World Incident Name</b>	Winter Storm 2021	
<b>Response Dates</b>	2/11/2021-3/6/2021	
<b>Date of Jurisdiction's Emergency Declaration</b>	2/14/2021	
<b>Type</b>	Real-World Incident	
<b>Jurisdiction</b>	City/County: City of Fredericksburg/Gillespie County	
<b>Scope</b> (local, regional, state, multi-jurisdictional)	The effects of the storm were statewide.	
<b>Mission Area(s)</b> (Prevention, Protection, Response, Recovery, Mitigation)	Response and Recovery	
<b>Core Capabilities</b> (check a minimum of four Core Capabilities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Access Control and Identity Verification
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Community Resilience
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Critical Transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cybersecurity
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Economic Recovery
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Environmental Response/Health and Safety
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fatality Management Services
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fire Management and Suppression
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Forensics and Attribution
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Health and Social Services
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Housing
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Infrastructure Systems
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intelligence and Information Sharing
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interdiction and Disruption

	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Logistics and Supply Chain Management
		Long-Term Vulnerability Reduction
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Mass Care Services
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Mass Search and Rescue Operations
		Natural and Cultural Resources
		On-scene Security, Protection, and Law Enforcement
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Operational Communications
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Operational Coordination
		Physical Protective Measures
		Planning
		Public Health, Healthcare, and Emergency Medical Services
		Public Information and Warning
		Risk and Disaster Resilience Assessment
		Risk Management for Protection Programs and Activities
		Screening, Search, and Detection
		Situational Assessment
		Supply Chain Integrity and Security
		Threat and Hazard Identification
		Other (Add your own)
<b>Objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure the safety of citizens</li> <li>2. Provide a shelter for displaced citizens</li> <li>3. Maintain and restore critical infrastructure (roads, electrical power, communications, and water)</li> </ol>	
<b>Threat or Hazard</b>	Winter Storm	
<b>Scenario</b>	A winter storm moved through Gillespie County causing a significant impact on the citizens and infrastructure throughout the county.	
<b>Jurisdiction's Chief Elected Official</b> (Or community leader)	Name: Mark Stroeher Title: Gillespie County Judge Phone: 830-997-7502 Email: <a href="mailto:mstroeher@gillespiecounty.org">mstroeher@gillespiecounty.org</a>	
<b>Point of Contact</b>	Name: Justin Calhoun Title: Emergency Management Coordinator Phone: 830-990-2033 Email: <a href="mailto:jcalhoun@fbgtx.org">jcalhoun@fbgtx.org</a>	

## Incident Summary

On February 11, 2021, Gillespie County began experiencing a winter storm. The storm began as rain fell and the temperature started dropping. The rain turned into freezing rain and ice began to form. Residents of Gillespie County began losing power on the first day of this storm, and the weather continued to worsen over the next few days. Governor Abbott declared a statewide disaster on February 12, 2021. On Saturday, February 13, 2021, the decision was made to open the Gillespie County/City of Fredericksburg Emergency Operation Center (EOC), and Judge Stroehrer declared a local disaster on February 14, 2021.

The EOC began prioritizing calls from dispatch on welfare concerns. At this point in the event, many residents had been without power for multiple days. Due to communication problems throughout the county, people were unable to contact their friends and family. The EOC began sending personnel out to check on these people. While doing this, the crews would take bottled water, food, and fuel to these citizens to help them stay warm. If the residents wanted, they could be transported back to the shelter at the Fredericksburg Elementary School, or the shelters established throughout the county at the volunteer fire departments. The shelters throughout the county were essential to the overall operation. These shelters allowed people who had been without power for multiple days, a warm place to stay with food and water.

Communications continued to be a problem throughout the event. Cell phone service was intermittent throughout the county for multiple days. Two of the three radio towers used by Fire/EMS lost power, and their backup batteries were drained before power was restored. This made dispatching these departments very difficult. 911 service was also lost for a period. Once it was restored, Gillespie County Communications was still receiving 911 calls from other counties due to widespread outages.

Critical infrastructure suffered severe damage during the event. Central Texas Electric Coop and the City of Fredericksburg Electric Department worked tirelessly throughout the event trying to restore power. This became very difficult due to the cold weather, high usage, rolling brownouts, and catastrophic damage. The water systems in Harper and Fredericksburg had problems due to the cold weather and the power outages. Residents that relied on well water also had problems due to the power outages. The City of Fredericksburg was able to acquire generators from local businesses to overcome the power issues and to keep the public water system working. A generator was also secured for Harper to use, but it was discovered that they had frozen pipes in their system that would require repair before operations could be restored.

The roadways were treacherous throughout the event. The delivery of essential needs became a big concern. Large stores like HEB and Walmart were not receiving their normal shipments. Supplies in these stores became depleted, and it was unknown when a resupply would happen. The EOC worked directly with the store managers to ensure the shelters had food and water, and to have an overview of when the supply chain would be restored. Another major commodity that was in question was fuel. Due to the conditions of the roadways, it made fuel deliveries difficult. The EOC worked directly with the City of Fredericksburg Public Works and local businesses to ensure there was fuel for emergency vehicles and emergency generators.

This winter weather storm was a unique disaster because of the statewide impact. The EOC realized early on that receiving assets from outside was going to be difficult. The EOC worked with local businesses and residents to acquire supplies and materials needed to keep the operation going. Without the support of these people during the storm, there could have been a very different outcome.

The communication problems were somewhat of a surprise. The fact that two of the three towers for Fire/EMS radio communications were down for so long made communications difficult. Under normal circumstances, battery backup usually works well, but no one anticipated the loss of electrical power for that amount of time. The radio tower that had a backup generator was able to stay in operation for the duration of the event. The loss of cell service in parts of the county also severely hindered operations. The EOC had a hard time communicating with outlying fire departments and shelters due to radio problems and cell phone issues.

The overall response for this event was outstanding. The Gillespie County Communications personnel receiving the calls for service worked extremely hard. The center received over 9,000 calls in ten days with a one-day total of over 1,600. The first responders throughout the county went above and beyond performing welfare checks and setting up shelters in their fire stations. The shelter that was established at the Fredericksburg Elementary School, and later moved to the First Baptist Church, provided housing for many people. The personnel working on the critical infrastructure worked many long hours to restore those services as quickly as possible. The local businesses and residents came together to provide much-needed supplies and equipment.

## Analysis of Core Capabilities

Aligning response objectives and core capabilities provide a standard for evaluation to support preparedness reporting and trend analysis. Table 1 includes the response objectives, aligned core capabilities, and performance ratings for each core capability as observed during the response and determined by the evaluation team.

Response Objective	Core Capability	Performed without Challenges (P)	Performed with Some Challenges (S)	Performed with Major Challenges (M)	Unable to be Performed (U)
Provide for the needs of the community using local resources.	Community Resilience		S		
Maintain roadways during a winter storm.	Critical Transportation		S		
Maintain critical infrastructure during a winter storm.	Infrastructure Systems			M	
Provide or have the ability to purchase essentials.	Logistics and Supply Chain Management		S		
Provide an emergency shelter for residents without power or water. Provide warmth, food, water, and a place to sleep.	Mass Care Services		S		
Check on the welfare of members of the community.	Mass Search and Rescue Operation		S		
Communicate effectively during an emergency event.	Operational Communication			M	
Coordinate emergency operations effectively.	Operational Coordination		S		

**Ratings Definitions:**

- **Performed without Challenges (P):** The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s) and did not negatively impact the performance of other activities. Performance of this activity did not contribute to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers, and it was conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws.
- **Performed with Some Challenges (S):** The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s) and did not negatively impact the performance of other activities. Performance of this activity did not contribute to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers, and it was conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws. However, opportunities to enhance effectiveness and/or efficiency were identified.
- **Performed with Major Challenges (M):** The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were completed in a manner that achieved the objective(s), but some or all of the following were observed: demonstrated performance had a negative impact on the performance of other activities; contributed to additional health and/or safety risks for the public or for emergency workers; and/or was not conducted in accordance with applicable plans, policies, procedures, regulations, and laws.
- **Unable to be Performed (U):** The targets and critical tasks associated with the core capability were not performed in a manner that achieved the objective(s).

**Table 1. Summary of Core Capability Performance**

The following sections provide an overview of the performance related to each response objective and associated core capability, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.

**Core Capability****Community Resilience\***

Mission Area: Mitigation

Description: Enable the recognition, understanding, communication of, and planning for risk and empower individuals and communities to make informed risk management decisions necessary to adapt to, withstand, and quickly recover from future incidents.

**Objective:** Provide for the needs of the community using local resources.

**Strengths**

- Citizens and businesses throughout the community provided resources to mitigate problems encountered during the storm. Due to the vast area that the storm affected across the state, it was difficult to receive state resources. The citizens and businesses immediately began offering supplies and resources that would benefit the community. The following items were some of the resources provided:
  - a. Generators
  - b. Bottled water
  - c. Food
  - d. Sleeping materials
  - e. Food grade totes for potable water
  - f. Shelter locations
  - g. Snow chains
  - h. Propane
  - i. Firewood
- Members of the community did not hesitate to help their neighbors and other people within the community. Many people provided shelter in their homes for neighbors. Members of the community were delivering food, water, and firewood to the people



around them. This allowed citizens to shelter in place and not have to be moved to one of the public shelters in the community.

### Areas for Improvement

#### Observations:

- Having a list of citizens and businesses and the resources and supplies that they offer. If this information were available before the event, it would be easier to reach out to those individuals and request assistance.
- Having an assigned person in the EOC to manage these resources.

#### Recommendation:

- Having a list of resources available before an emergency would reduce the amount of time it took to activate some of these resources.
- Having someone in the EOC to manage the resources that are provided by the community. This would allow for the resources to be tracked better and make sure that they are returned to the proper location. There were numerous phone calls to the EOC with people offering supplies and resources. Having one person to manage what has been donated and what needs are still out there would greatly increase the efficiency of the operation.

## Core Capability

### Critical Transportation

Mission Area: Response

Description: Provide transportation (including infrastructure access and accessible transportation services) for response priority objectives, including the evacuation of people and animals, and the delivery of vital response personnel, equipment, and services into the affected areas.

**Objective:** Maintain roadways during a winter storm.

#### Strengths

- TxDOT, Gillespie County Road Department, and City of Fredericksburg Street Department worked continuously to keep the roads open. The three agencies were constantly working to keep the roads passable. They were dealing with ice, debris, downed power lines, and downed power poles.
- TxDOT was able to close highways that became impassable because of ice. This reduced the number of emergency calls to those areas.
- All agencies were readily available and answered calls from the EOC about specific roadway issues.

### Areas for Improvement

#### Observations:

- The number of road staff on duty for all agencies. Due to the nature of the storm, it was difficult for some personnel to make it to work. With limited staff, it is difficult to maintain roadways across the entire county.
- Although TxDOT was able to close the roadways, it took an order from the County Judge. The County Judge was able to send emails to the TxDOT representative to get the roads closed. This required extra time to get the roads closed and were sometimes



- difficult due to the communication infrastructure that was damaged or without power.
- The ability to remove vehicles from the roadway quickly. Many vehicles were stranded or abandoned in dangerous areas of the road. Having the capability to remove these vehicles quickly would improve the roadway conditions.

**Recommendation:**

- Having as much staff as possible to work on the roadways is important. Having the roads cleared so that first responders, utility workers, and critical supplies can utilize the roadways is crucial.
- When the roads do become impassable, operational personnel must be allowed to close roadways. Those crews working have the best knowledge of the conditions of the roadway at that time. When those crews deem the road impassable, they should be able to close those roads and report that information to TxDOT.

## Core Capability Infrastructure Systems\*

Mission Area: Response, Recovery

Description: Stabilize critical infrastructure functions, minimize health and safety threats, and efficiently restore and revitalize systems and services to support a viable, resilient community.

**Objective:** Maintain critical infrastructure during a winter storm.

**Strengths**

- The Conference/Training Room on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Gillespie County Jail is well equipped to house the EOC. The building is equipped with multiple backup generators, a kitchen, shower facilities, and enough space to provide sleeping areas. There was enough space for the housing of Gillespie County Communications personnel and multiple members of the EOC for the duration of the event.
- Gillespie County Communications personnel's ability to work through communication infrastructure failure and still be able to provide emergency services to the community. The dispatchers were able to work through a failure of the 911 system, Fire/EMS radio tower failure, cell phone system failure, and internet system failure.
- The City of Fredericksburg Water/Wastewater Department worked tirelessly to restore the city's water/wastewater system. They experienced problems with water leaks, power outages, and loss of water. They were able to use the remote water metering system to pinpoint homes and businesses with water leaks and turn the meters off to those locations.
- The City of Fredericksburg Electric Department worked many long hours to maintain the electrical system in Fredericksburg. They encountered issues with tree limbs, extreme usage, and rolling brownouts. The department was able to work through these conditions, and City of Fredericksburg Electric customers suffered minimal power outages considering the magnitude of the winter storm.
- Central Texas Electric Coop (CTEC) worked long hours to restore power to its members. The CTEC system suffered extreme damage in some areas. CTEC was able to order supplies early in the event which helped in the restoration phase. CTEC also held their contractors from traveling to other areas, and this allowed CTEC to have additional resources early in the event to work on their system. CTEC Outage

Management System allowed CTEC to see where there were problems and how many people were without power. This also allowed them to document damage and know what resources and supplies would be needed to resolve the issues. The EOC and CTEC were able to work together to secure a helicopter so that CTEC could do a damage assessment survey from the air. The Texas Forest Service (TFS) was also assigned to assist CTEC, and they provided bulldozers and utility vehicles to assist CTEC personnel.

### Areas for Improvement

#### Observations:

- There is a critical need for more backup generators throughout the community.
  - The designated shelter in the community needs to have backup power. There was only a short power outage at the Fredericksburg Elementary School shelter but had it continued longer this could have been a huge dilemma. There were multiple people there with medical equipment that needed a power source.
  - The Fredericksburg Water/Wastewater Department also needs backup generators on their water wells, pump stations, and treatment facility. They were able to secure generators during the event to support this critical infrastructure. Having generators on-site that are ready to be activated during a power outage would greatly reduce the amount of stress on the water/wastewater system.
  - The radio towers used by emergency personnel need backup generators. One of the three towers used by Fire/EMS has a propane-operated backup generator. There were no problems with this tower during the event. The other two towers were only on battery backup. Once power was lost to these locations it was only a short time before they became inoperable. This greatly reduced the ability of Fire/EMS to communicate with each other and Gillespie County Communications throughout the event.
  - The 911 system, although not in our jurisdiction, needs to be on a backup generator. Both host sites for our local system had battery backup systems, and this caused problems with 911 calls being rerouted to different dispatch centers before reaching their destination.
- The water system in Harper is maintained by a non-government business. The EOC tried to contact them multiple times and had no success. A generator was provided to Harper to restore the water system, however by the time the generator was connected the water system had frozen and had damaged the infrastructure.
- Many residents of Gillespie County depend on well water for their homes. When the electricity is out for multiple days this causes major concerns for these residents. Without the ability to run water not only do they not have water at their homes, but this causes their wells and water pipes to freeze in extremely cold temperatures. Many of these residents depend on these wells to water their livestock as well.
- Hill Country Memorial Hospital lost its City of Fredericksburg water supply and was using on-site reserve water at one point during the storm. The water system was in a critical state due to power outages and water leaks. A combination of these events caused the hospital to lose its water supply. This situation became an emergency due to the duration of time that the hospital was without water. The City of Fredericksburg Water Department and hospital staff worked together to determine the problems and restore water to the hospital. The EOC was working with the Southwest Texas Regional Advisory Council (STRAC) on moving all the patients to a different location. STRAC advised that this would not be possible due to water issues

across San Antonio as well.

- CTEC used multiple outlets to communicate with their members however, all their members did not receive or see this information. CTEC also could not answer all their phone calls. This generated more phone calls for Gillespie County Communications.
- It took over three weeks to restore power to all the CTEC members. Once additional crews were brought in, the process moved quickly. Being able to access and support those additional crews as early as possible is crucial.

#### **Recommendation:**

- The City of Fredericksburg and Gillespie County need to reinforce critical infrastructure with backup generators. Once generators were in place on the critical infrastructure it greatly reduced the problems throughout the community.
- The City of Fredericksburg is in the process of improving the city water system to the hospital. The city is working with a consultant to see what is needed to improve this situation. The hospital being able to operate is essential for the well-being of the community. Improving the infrastructure to the hospital will greatly support this key partner within the community.
- Have a designated location for citizens to get potable water and water for livestock. Many of the volunteer fire departments provided this service throughout the event. Having these arrangements made before the event would have made the process smoother.

## **Core Capability**

### **Logistics and Supply Chain Management\***

Mission Area: Response

Description: Deliver essential commodities, equipment, and services in support of impacted communities and survivors, including emergency power and fuel support, as well as the coordination of access to community staples. Synchronize logistics capabilities and enable the restoration of impacted supply chains.

**Objective:** Provide or have the ability to purchase essentials.

#### **Strengths**

- The Texas Forest Service (TFS) was able to provide fuel to residents who needed fuel to run their generators. The TFS has multiple vehicles with fuel capabilities. They were able to take these vehicles down treacherous roadways to provide this service.
- First responders were able to take food and water to residents in need. When someone would call in with a welfare concern, the first responders would deliver food and water when they checked on the residents. This allowed the resident to remain in their home and not have to be moved to the community shelter.
- The EOC was able to contact local vendors and have status updates on their deliveries. By having this open line of communication, there was a clear understanding of the issues within the supply chain. These vendors worked with the EOC to ensure that the shelters had the proper supplies to continue to support the residents staying there.
- Fredericksburg Medical Supply provided Fredericksburg Fire/EMS with extra oxygen bottles for patients. With Fredericksburg Fire/EMS normal supply chains being shut

down due to the road conditions, Fredericksburg Medical Supply was able to provide oxygen for patients throughout the community.

- Water became a major concern because many residents were without water in their homes. The supply chains were stressed because of the treacherous roadways, and deliveries were slowed to local vendors. Grape Creek Vineyards and Lost Draw Cellars provided 300-gallon food-grade totes to transport water. We were able to fill these totes off the city water supply and deliver them to Harper Volunteer Fire Department and Willow City Fire and Rescue Department where citizens could come to these locations to retrieve water.

### Areas for Improvement

#### Observations:

- There was a limited supply of food and water to be distributed initially. Fredericksburg Fire/EMS was able to purchase two pallets of water early in the event. The TFS had MRE's in storage at their station.
- Citizens were overbuying during the winter storm. It became apparent that supply trucks were having issues making it to the vendor. This created a sense of panic among the public, creating the rumor that there was not going to be enough food, water, and fuel.

#### Recommendation:

- Have a supply of food and water on hand to support a shelter operation for the first few days of an event. Having this supply would enable us to set up a shelter and be self-sufficient for the first few days. This would also take some stress off the public supply chain. Having the means to transport bulk potable water to residents would be helpful moving forward.
- Perform training for the public to inform them of the importance of not overbuying. Educating the public in this area may reduce the chaos during an actual event.

### Core Capability

#### Mass Care Services

Mission Area: Response

Description: Provide life-sustaining and human services to the affected population, including hydration, feeding, sheltering, temporary housing, evacuee support, reunification, and distribution of emergency supplies.

**Objective:** Provide an emergency shelter for residents without power or water. Provide warmth, food, water, and a place to sleep.

#### Strengths

- The Needs Council provided air mattresses, food, bedding, sheets, blankets, volunteers for transportation to showers (once made available), volunteers, and vehicles for shutting down and packing supplies at the Fredericksburg Elementary School shelter, and hotel rooms for remaining shelter residents once we closed.
- Cots and sleeping bags were delivered to the shelter by the fire department.
- Fredericksburg Independent School District provided food and people to prepare the food for most meals, access to a gym for younger people to play basketball, a large area so people could spread out, plenty of tables to sit at during the day, daily

restroom cleaning, salting of icy areas, and a kitchen with large refrigerators for medicines and leftovers.

- Received much-needed help from the City of Fredericksburg Sanitation Department, Gillespie County Health Department, and the City of Fredericksburg Development Services with volunteering at the shelters. One police officer was on duty for three days, and others would check on us as time allowed too.
- Parks Department staff were great at covering shifts and doing the best they could on many things they are not trained to handle.
- The First Baptist Church provided many meals, showers, laundry facilities, a kitchen, and a library when the shelter was moved to that location.
- Food donations from local restaurants and individuals.
- Good communication between the shelter and the EOC, Fredericksburg Independent School District, and the Needs Council.
- Many volunteers worked at the home of at least one of the shelter residents to get her back up and running so she could return home.
- The people that did work at the shelter went above and beyond to help the shelter residents.

### Areas for Improvement

#### Observations:

- Paid employees and volunteers to man the shelter. There were not enough volunteers, especially for overnight shifts. Many people could not get to the shelter to volunteer due to icy conditions on the roads. The shelter manager had to travel in dangerous conditions from out in the county to get to the shelter. There should be a list of volunteers based on location so, depending on the location of the emergency, there is a group that is required to work the shelter. An alternate shelter manager from a different department should be named that lives inside the city limits. Depending on the nature of the emergency, Parks Department staff may not be available or may be preoccupied dealing with problems in the parks as it was in this emergency.
- There were many older people at the shelter, many of which had medical conditions including diabetes with daily insulin injections, multiple people on oxygen, many people who could not get off cots or air mattresses without help, legally blind, and several disabled residents. EMS had to be called many times. Some shelter residents noticeably went downhill from entering the shelter to leaving.
- There need to be three people for every shift in addition to the shelter manager. The shelter manager cannot always be at the shelter. The three should include at least one woman and one man and someone trained in nursing or emergency medical services.
- We had one shelter resident with dementia that walked out in the snow to walk home several miles away. Someone saw her and picked her up to take her home. Once the Police Department found her and returned her to her husband at the shelter, she required constant monitoring. She was regularly trying to escape and would become very disoriented at night and wander around trying to get into bed with other people. One of the many reasons three people are always needed.
- We had several older shelter guests that broke down in tears due to their situations. Many wanted us to help them find assistance with repairs to their homes and how to get these repairs paid for. Parks staff and other volunteers at the shelter are not

trained in social work.

- We lost power at the shelter one night for about 3-4 hours.
- Volunteers need to be able to lift 100 pounds or more. Many shelter residents needed to be regularly assisted in getting out of cots or beds. These are so low to the ground that they did not have the strength to do it themselves
- There was no shower at the Fredericksburg Elementary School shelter. Many people were asking where they could take a shower. Showers were made available at the First Baptist Church later in the week, but residents had to be transported and limited to 5 minutes each. The Needs Council provided towels. Once the shelter was moved to the First Baptist Church, showers were available 24 hours a day with toiletries and towels provided by the church.
- A working washing machine and dryer would have been nice. The Fredericksburg Elementary School had these, but the washer did not work. People living for an extended period at the shelter and especially those with health conditions need clean clothes. Both showers and clean clothes can be a morale booster to get through a difficult situation.
- Almost none of the shelter residents brought a change of clothes and came into the shelter dirty as they had not had water or power to take a shower at home.
- We originally had a capacity of about 100 people for the Fredericksburg Elementary School shelter. At 35 people, we were out of plugs for all the people with oxygen and CPAP machines as well as everyone else wanting to charge phones. We had extension cords running all over the place which were trip hazards. Plugs could be the limiting factor for shelter capacity.
- The gym was available for sleeping but was drafty due to the roll-up doors and too cold for people to sleep in. The two men that tried it the first night eventually came into the cafeteria as it would not get warm enough in the gym. The heater was set as high as it would go but could not keep up.
- An ADA-accessible restroom very close to the shelter sleeping area is needed. At the Fredericksburg Elementary School, there was a restroom in the kitchen that was not ADA accessible. One ADA restroom required people to walk outside and the other was down a hallway and around a corner. Many of the residents could not walk that far with their canes and walkers. They would use the one in the kitchen which required them to walk around food preparation areas, and the door could not always be closed with their walkers. Some also needed assistance using the restroom. Parks staff and other volunteers are not trained to do this.
- Many of the shelter residents needed medication. Some came with the medication and some did not have enough or left it at home. Shelter staff worked with the EOC to get the medication, but some of the residents did not have all the information they needed to get a new prescription. Staff drove a couple of people to their houses to get their medication and went into one house alone to get her medication to bring back to her.
- Pets were not allowed at the shelter. There was a plan to send them to the animal shelter, but this was not advertised as space at the animal shelter was limited. What would have happened if the animal shelter capacity were reached? One lady had an anxiety dog she refused to leave so she did not stay at the shelter.
- Many of the shelter residents needed to get to their homes after the freeze was over for additional supplies, to check on water leaks, animals, change of clothes, and to get a vehicle for transportation. Shelter workers drove some of these to their homes



and helped them check on issues created by the storm. Some of the shelter residents were able to return home after they checked their houses out, but it was difficult getting time to take them to their homes and keep the shelter manned.

- How do we make sure people do not take advantage of the shelter? Some shelter residents could have gone home earlier or had other friends and family options but stayed at the shelter.
- Some shelter residents had to have special meals for their diets such as gluten-free. They would get sick if they did not have these. One of these shelter residents was taken by ambulance and did not return. How do we provide special meals when meals, in general, are limited?
- Should visitors be allowed and if so, what should the rules be for them? One shelter resident had visitors come by and play basketball while other visitors came to assist residents in the shelter.
- Should there be a standard policy for city employees to get a hotel room paid for if transportation to and from their home is too dangerous, and it is the only thing keeping them from helping at the shelter or in other ways? This may not apply for all emergencies as it did in this one.
- We had 65 unique shelter visitors at the Fredericksburg Elementary School and the First Baptist Church. All of these were county residents but only about 5 or fewer were city residents. The County Human Resource Department was spoken to about any help they could provide, but no one contacted the shelter manager based on the email that was sent out. Five county employees helped, and they were much appreciated, but additional county support was needed to keep the shelter manned at 2-3 people 24 hours a day.
- We needed more bottled water especially when the shelter initially opened. Water fountains at the school were shut down due to COVID-19, but we ended up using one bottle fill fountain until we received more bottled water. We received a donation of about 30 refillable cups people used.
- Two men showed up at the Fredericksburg Elementary School shelter one day and when shelter staff asked them to sign in, they said they just wanted to check out the shelter and see if we needed any help. The shelter staff was distracted on the phone at the time, so they walked around and talked to some of the shelter residents. It was noticed later they had left, and no one had gotten their names. It was suspicious since they did not assist while they were there.
- The Fredericksburg Elementary School did not have just one way to enter and leave. It was very difficult at times to keep up with who was at the shelter and who had left. Some would come and go during the day and not check out. At the First Baptist Church, there was one main entrance and far fewer people so keeping an exact count was easier.

#### **Recommendation:**

- Have two shelter managers from different departments named in the emergency plan (or even one from the county). The two shelter managers can alternate 12-hour shifts (one on nights and one on days) so one shelter manager is not trying to handle everything 24 hours a day for the life of the shelter. If one shelter manager is not available due to the emergency location including their home, the other could manage the shelter.
- Determine if the American Red Cross will be available to help with running or manning future shelters.



- Have someone trained in health care on duty at all times the shelter is opened.
- Have social workers available to handle questions from shelter residents. They could come by the shelter daily for a couple of hours to assist the residents especially once the emergency is over and a transition back is needed.
- Have a better-written plan as to when the shelter will close and reopen and what will be done with the people remaining in the shelter when it is closed.
- Have a better-written plan as to who is responsible for the people remaining in the shelter when it is closed. In this case, they were moved to hotels or short-term rental homes paid for by the Needs Council. They also provided HEB gift cards for them. Who is responsible for people once they are in the hotels? In the future who is responsible for getting them in a hotel, providing them meals, and checking on them? Include these details in the plan.
- Have at least one male and one female on each shift at the shelter.
- Keep a shelter work list of city and county employees that would be required to work and a volunteer list with addresses for each person, so we know who is available based on the location of the emergency to assist at the shelter. This should be updated annually.
- Consider shelter locations with backup generators.
- Have assistance from employees with marked vehicles that can conduct a home check for those in the shelter without transportation. These were not emergencies so not something police, fire, or EMS had time for, but shelter residents wanted their homes checked for power and water status. Unmarked personal vehicles may have looked suspicious to neighbors.
- What if the Needs Council had not been available to help? Where would have all the shelter supplies have come from?
- The shelter should have one main entry/exit and others should be locked to better keep track of who is in the shelter. This is another reason more shelter workers are needed on each shift.

## Core Capability

### Mass Search and Rescue Operations

Mission Area: Response

Description: Deliver traditional and atypical search and rescue capabilities, including personnel, services, animals, and assets to survivors in need, with the goal of saving the greatest number of endangered lives in the shortest time possible.

Objective: Check on the welfare of members of the community

#### Strengths

- The EOC quickly devised a plan to check on the numerous welfare concerns that were coming into Gillespie County Communications. As these calls were received by dispatchers, they were passed over to the EOC. The EOC would prioritize those concerns and send the appropriate unit (Fire, EMS, Police, Sheriff's Deputy, Texas Forest Service, Game Warden, and other departments that were assisting).
- Each volunteer fire department was taking care of its area. They were not only responding to welfare concerns dispatched from the EOC, but they were also taking care of ones being called directly to their stations. These first responders provided many essential needs for members of their community, and this allowed those citizens

to shelter in place instead of moving to the community shelter.

- The TFS was able to provide fuel to citizens for their generators. This allowed people to stay in their homes and not try to navigate the roadways in treacherous conditions. Having this outside resource greatly increased our ability to help meet the citizen's needs.
- The EOC would call the complainant back once contact was made with the person they were concerned about. This ensured the complainant that the person was ok.

### Areas for Improvement

#### Observations:

- The number of welfare concerns was alarming to the EOC. This is not something the EOC had originally forecasted as a major concern/need.
- The lack of four-wheel-drive vehicles and snow chains was an issue. For a large portion of the event, roadways were impassable without a four-wheel-drive vehicle or snow chains. This made doing the welfare checks very difficult. Citizens and businesses began donating snow chains and this allowed for more vehicles to be used for this operation.

#### Recommendation:

- Having more four-wheel-drive vehicles would be very beneficial. The Fredericksburg Police Department and Gillespie County Sheriff's Department had minimal vehicles with these capabilities. Having a four-wheel drive greatly increases the response capability during inclement weather events.
- Having snow chains for fire engines, ambulances, and other two-wheel-drive vehicles would greatly increase the capability of emergency services.

## Core Capability

### Operational Communications\*

Mission Area: Response

Description: Ensure the capacity for timely communications in support of security, situational awareness, and operations by any and all means available, among and between affected communities in the impact area and all response forces.

**Objective:** Communicate effectively during an emergency event.

#### Strengths

- Gillespie County Communications and the EOC were in the same building. This greatly increased the ability of the two to communicate effectively. As the dispatchers would receive calls they would send a runner or call over to ask questions about how situations should be handled. The two centers worked together very well to mitigate issues.
- The EOC and community leaders were in contact constantly. The community leaders were able to be reached by phone at any time of day. This allowed the EOC to contact them with any questions or concerns. The community leaders would also call and visit the EOC to help when needed.
- Gillespie County Communications and the EOC communicated with the operational personnel even when there were critical infrastructure issues. The first responders within the county found ways to report to dispatch and the EOC even when they were having radio, cell phone, and landline problems.

- The Public Information Officer (PIO) continually pushed out updates to the public. The PIO would use social media and other avenues to inform the public of weather updates, EOC updates, utility updates, and other crucial information.

### Areas for Improvement

#### Observations:

- Having additional stakeholders in the EOC could have improved the communication process. Having representatives from the City of Fredericksburg Public Works, CTEC, and Hill Country Memorial Hospital could have increased efficiency and eliminated duplicate efforts.
- Critical communication infrastructure failure during the event was very taxing on the Gillespie County Communications personnel and the first responders in the field. With 2 of the 3 radio towers down it made radio communications difficult. Having these issues along with cell phone problems at some points communication became impossible.

#### Recommendation:

- Depending on the emergency event, it is important to have all the key stakeholders in the EOC. Having this personnel in the EOC allows them to work on solutions to problems in one location. The stakeholders can work on common issues together and work towards common goals.
- Critical communication infrastructure needs to have backup generator power. With multiple systems failing during this event, it was very difficult to communicate with responders across the county. Without the ability to communicate it became very difficult to coordinate response and ensure the safety of responders.

## Core Capability

### Operational Coordination\*

Mission Areas: All

Description: Establish and maintain a unified and coordinated operational structure and process that appropriately integrates all critical stakeholders and supports the execution of core capabilities.

**Objective:** Coordinate emergency operations effectively.

#### Strengths

- The EOC was comprised of personnel from Emergency Management, Fredericksburg Fire/EMS, Fredericksburg Police Department, Gillespie County Sheriff's Department, TFS, and Gillespie County Communications. All these agencies worked together to solve problems that arose and dispatch appropriate personnel to welfare checks and emergency calls.
- Personnel from all departments across the city and county filled into roles that were assigned to them without hesitation. Multiple departments filled into roles that they would not normally be assigned. They did this without complaint and did an outstanding job in these newly assigned roles.
- Elected officials worked with the EOC in support of the operation. The elected officials allowed the EOC to run the operational portion and the elected officials supported the EOC decisions. The elected officials assisted immediately when they were needed to make decisions and provide documentation.

## Areas for Improvement

### Observations:

- Having additional support staff in the EOC would have allowed the members to work more efficiently. At times it was difficult to manage documentation and answering the phones while trying to make operational decisions. Having that extra personnel to assist in those areas would make the operation move more fluid and efficient.
- Having a schedule for members of the EOC and first responders to allow for downtime. Many members of the EOC remained there for 24 hours a day for multiple days. The first responders were working 24 hours a day as well for multiple days. This type of schedule is very taxing on that personnel.

### Recommendation:

- Having designated support staff would be beneficial moving forward. This personnel could receive the proper training and could assist the EOC in an emergency operation.
- Having a planned schedule for EOC members and first responders before the emergency event takes place. Working continuously for multiple days is difficult and demanding. Having a pre-determined schedule that would allow personnel to have downtime would be very beneficial.

## Resources from Outside the Jurisdiction

Resource	Place of Origin
Bottled Water	ARC, FEMA, TDEM, TFS
Meals Ready to Eat (MRE)	ARC, FEMA, TFS
Sleeping Cots	TDEM
Shower Trailers	TDEM
Helicopter	DPS

ARC- American Red Cross

DPS- Department of Public Safety

FEMA- Federal Emergency Management Agency

TDEM- Texas Division of Emergency Management

TFS- Texas Forest Service

## Appendix A: Improvement Plan

Core Capability	Issue/Area for Improvement	Corrective Action	Primary Responsible Organization	Start Date	Completion Date
Infrastructure Systems	Backup Generators	Purchase backup generators for critical infrastructure within the City of Fredericksburg and Gillespie County	City of Fredericksburg and Gillespie County	TBD	TBD
Infrastructure Systems	Water Supply to Hill Country Memorial Hospital	Improve the water supply to Hill Country Memorial Hospital	City of Fredericksburg	April 2021	TBD
Infrastructure Systems	The ability to answer phone calls about electrical problems at CTEC	Improve the community communication systems.	CTEC	TBD	TBD
Mass Care Services	Improve Shelter Operations	Improve Annex C of the Emergency Operation Plan with the lessons learned from this event	City of Fredericksburg and Gillespie County	TBD	TBD
Mass Search and Rescue Operations	More 4-wheel drive vehicles and snow chains	Purchase more snow chains for emergency vehicles and research the benefit of 4-wheel drive vehicles	City of Fredericksburg and Gillespie County	TBD	TBD
Operational Communication/ Operational Coordination	Involve more key stakeholders in the EOC and have support staff	Train with more stakeholders in the community and train additional support staff on EOC operations	City of Fredericksburg and Gillespie County	TBD	TBD

## Appendix B: Response Agencies

Local, State, Federal Organizations	
Gillespie County Communications	Fredericksburg Police Department
Gillespie County Sherriff's Office	Fredericksburg Fire/EMS Department
Doss Volunteer Fire Department	Willow City Fire and Rescue Department
Harper Volunteer Fire Department	Stonewall Volunteer Fire Department
Tierra Linda Volunteer Fire Department	Texas Forest Service
City of Fredericksburg Water/ Wastewater Department	City of Fredericksburg Electric Department
City of Fredericksburg Street Department	City of Fredericksburg Parks Department
City of Fredericksburg Vegetation Management	City of Fredericksburg IT Department
City of Fredericksburg Development Services	City of Fredericksburg Sanitation Department
Gillespie County Health Department	Gillespie County Road Department
Texas Game Warden	TxDOT
Texas Department of Public Safety	