



Texas Division of Emergency Management State Situation Report

New Information in Blue Text

Event Name	24-0001 Wildfire Season 2024
Date	February 29, 2024
Time	10:00 AM
Operational Period	8:00 AM February 28 to 8:00 AM February 29, 2024
Report Number	1

Regions Affected

TDEM Regions Affected	1
DDs Active	1

STATEWIDE CURRENT SITUATION:

On February 28, 2024, Governor Abbott directed the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) to deploy additional state emergency response resources to support wildfire response operations as ongoing wildfires impact the Texas Panhandle. The Governor also directed TDEM to increase the readiness level of the Texas State Emergency Operations Center (SOC) to Level II (Escalated Response) in support of the state's around-the-clock response.

In response to a request from the State of Texas, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has approved a Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) request for the Smokehouse Creek Fire and Windy Deuce Fire, meaning that Texas will be eligible for 75% reimbursement from the federal government for costs associated with fighting those fires.

According to the Texas A&M Forest Service (TAMFS), a high volume of dry, freeze cured grasses will continue to support fire spread on Wednesday. As the weekend approaches, the fire environment will trend warmer and drier, resulting in the potential for additional wildfire activity across the Texas Panhandle this weekend. Portions of South Texas continue to face increased wildfire risk, as well as East Texas, amid active burns. Additionally, the Texas A&M Forest Service raised the Wildland Fire Preparedness Level to Level 3 on Wednesday due to an increase in current and expected wildfire activity over the next several days.

At the Governor's direction, TDEM has activated additional state emergency response resources to support wildfire response operations:

- **Texas A&M Forest Service:** 6 Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATs); All Hazards Incident Management Team (AHIMT) personnel; 6 Texas Intrastate Fire Mutual Aid System (TIFMAS) strike teams comprised of over 94 personnel and over 33 fire engines.
- **Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (Texas A&M Task Force 1, Texas Task Force 2, and Texas A&M Public Works Response Team):** Urban Search and Rescue Teams; Public Works Strike Teams.
- **Texas A&M Veterinary Emergency Team (VET):** Animal veterinary services in impacted communities.
- **Texas A&M AgriLife Extension:** Animal supply points to ensure livestock and pets are sheltered, have feed and critical care.
- **Texas Department of Public Safety:** Aviation assets for aerial mapping
- **Texas Parks and Wildlife Department:** Game Wardens to support local law enforcement.
- **Texas Department of State Health Services (Texas Emergency Medical Task Force):** Ambulance bus to support emergency medical mass care needs; 3 Wildland Fire Support Packages including paramedics and ambulances; 5 Medical Incident Support Team (MIST) personnel.

The deployment of these additional resources brings the total number of state emergency response resources to:

- **Texas A&M Forest Service:** Over 95 firefighters, heavy equipment such as bulldozers and motor graders; All Hazard Incident Management Team personnel; 11 Texas Intrastate Fire Mutual Aid System strike teams comprised of over 189 personnel and over 58 fire engines.
- **Texas Division of Emergency Management:** Emergency response personnel to support requests for assistance from local officials; personnel on-site to support local impacted communities.
- **Texas A&M AgriLife Extension:** Disaster Assessment and Recovery Agents as well as AgriLife Extension Agents to support agricultural and livestock needs.
- **Texas Military Department:** CH47 Chinook helicopter with firefighting capability.
- **Texas Department of State Health Services (Texas Emergency Medical Task Force):** Wildland Fire Support Packages including paramedics and ambulances.
- **Texas Department of Transportation:** Personnel and equipment to assist with road closures and fuel for firefighting support.
- **Texas Department of Public Safety:** Texas Highway Patrol Troopers to assist with road closures and traffic control.
- **Texas Animal Health Commission:** Personnel to provide livestock support.

- **Texas Commission on Environmental Quality:** Air/water/wastewater monitoring

Governor Abbott also urged Texans impacted by wildfire to report property damage by submitting an online damage assessment survey. Texans can report damage to homes, businesses, and agricultural property using the Individual State of Texas Assessment Tool (iSTAT). The iSTAT survey can be filled out in English and Spanish online at damage.tdem.texas.gov and click on "Ongoing Wildfire Incidents."

On February 27, Governor Abbott issued a [disaster declaration](#) for 60 Texas counties in response to widespread wildfire activity throughout the state. Additional counties may be added if conditions warrant. Governor Abbott also directed the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) to activate additional state emergency response resources to support local firefighters responding to multiple wildfires burning Texas.

OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES:

1. Protect life and property.
2. Support rapid & effective response.
3. Collect and disseminate accurate incident information to improve decision-making.
4. Accurately track incident costs associated with assigned resources for cost recovery.

Region 1 (Includes DDs 1, 2, and 7)

DD 1 – Amarillo (Includes Armstrong, Briscoe, Carson, Castro, Childress, Collingsworth, Dallam, Deaf Smith, Donley, Gray, Hall, Hansford, Hartley, Hemphill, Hutchinson, Lipscomb, Moore, Ochiltree, Oldham, Parmer, Potter, Randall, Roberts, Sherman, Swisher, and Wheeler Counties)

Carson County: The evacuation order for the city of Skellytown has been lifted.

Childress County: Evacuated livestock are being housed at the Mashburn Event Center. The Childress City Auditorium, First Baptist Church, and Carey First Baptist Church are open to evacuees.

Collingsworth County: American Red Cross (ARC) is setting up in the Wellington Activity Center.

Gray County: Gray County issued a disaster declaration on February 28. Evacuation from the city of Pampa is voluntary for residents and an emergency shelter is located at First Baptist Church and at the Gray County Animal Supply Point in Pampa.

The Grape Vine Creek Fire has 30,000 acres burned; zero homes lost with 60 percent containment.

Hemphill County: Hemphill County issued a disaster declaration on February 27. A shelter has been opened at the high school in Canadian.

Hutchinson County: A request for a Fire Management Assistance Declaration was submitted and approved by FEMA on February 27 for the Smokehouse Creek Fire. Mandatory evacuation orders have been issued for Meadowlark, Arroyo Verde, Sage Mesa, Bugbee, Double Diamond, Arrowhead, Sanford, Miami, and Maverick Village. A shelter has been opened at Celebration Family Church in Fritch and the Johnson Park Youth Center in Borger.

The 687 Reamer Fire has 2,000 acres burned, 14 homes and seven outbuildings lost with zero containment.

The Smokehouse Creek Fire has 850,000 acres burned; zero homes lost with 3 percent containment.

Moore County: A request for a Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) was submitted and later approved by FEMA on February 27 for the Windy Deuce Fire.

The Windy Deuce Fire has 40,000 acres burned; zero homes lost with 20 percent containment.

Ochiltree County: Mandatory evacuation orders have been issued for residents from HWY 83 North to South River Road, to the Ochiltree County line.

Oldham County: The Boys Ranch has been evacuated to the Vega Community Center due to fires out West.

The Magenta Fire has 2,000 acres burned; zero homes lost with 10 percent containment.

Potter County: Potter County issued a Letter to the Governor requesting a declaration of a state of emergency on February 27. A mandatory evacuation order has been issued for Mesilla Park and a shelter is open at 1330 NW 18th Street. The city of Amarillo issued a disaster declaration on February 27. First Methodist Church of Amarillo has announced that the church is open to evacuees.

Randall County: Randall County issued a disaster declaration on February 27.

Roberts County: Roberts County issued a disaster declaration on February 27.

Wheeler County: The shelter in Wheeler was relocated to Wellington Activity Center in Wellington and the Childress City Auditorium in Childress. The shelter located in Higgins, TX, has been relocated to the Agrilife building in Wheeler, TX.

RESPONDING STATE AGENCIES/ORGANIZATIONS REPORTS

Texas Division of Emergency Management, Texas A&M University System (TDEM): TDEM has communicated with Private Sector Partners (HEB and Walmart) to obtain their response posture. This included a survey of the retail environment to obtain awareness for open and closed locations in the affected area. TDEM has worked with Texas Food and Fuel Association to obtain fuel in theater status in affected area.

TDEM Communications Coordination Group (CCG): Amateur Radio operators (RACES/ARES) are supporting the Panhandle with the wildfire situation. Amateur Radio operators have identified personnel and resources to be deployed. High Frequency (HF) nets have been activated and are providing public service information to residents with amateur radios in isolated areas.

On February 28, Verizon reported the damaged network was back online and cellular sites have been rerouted. Repairs were completed on the Verizon fiber line for the impacted areas of Hansford, Ochiltree, and Sherman counties.

The Commission on State Emergency Communications (CSEC) reported Public Safety Access Points (PSAP) in the Panhandle have contingency plans in place to re-route 9-1-1 calls. Several circuits have been re-routed due to non-fire issues with back-up connections due to interruptions from high winds.

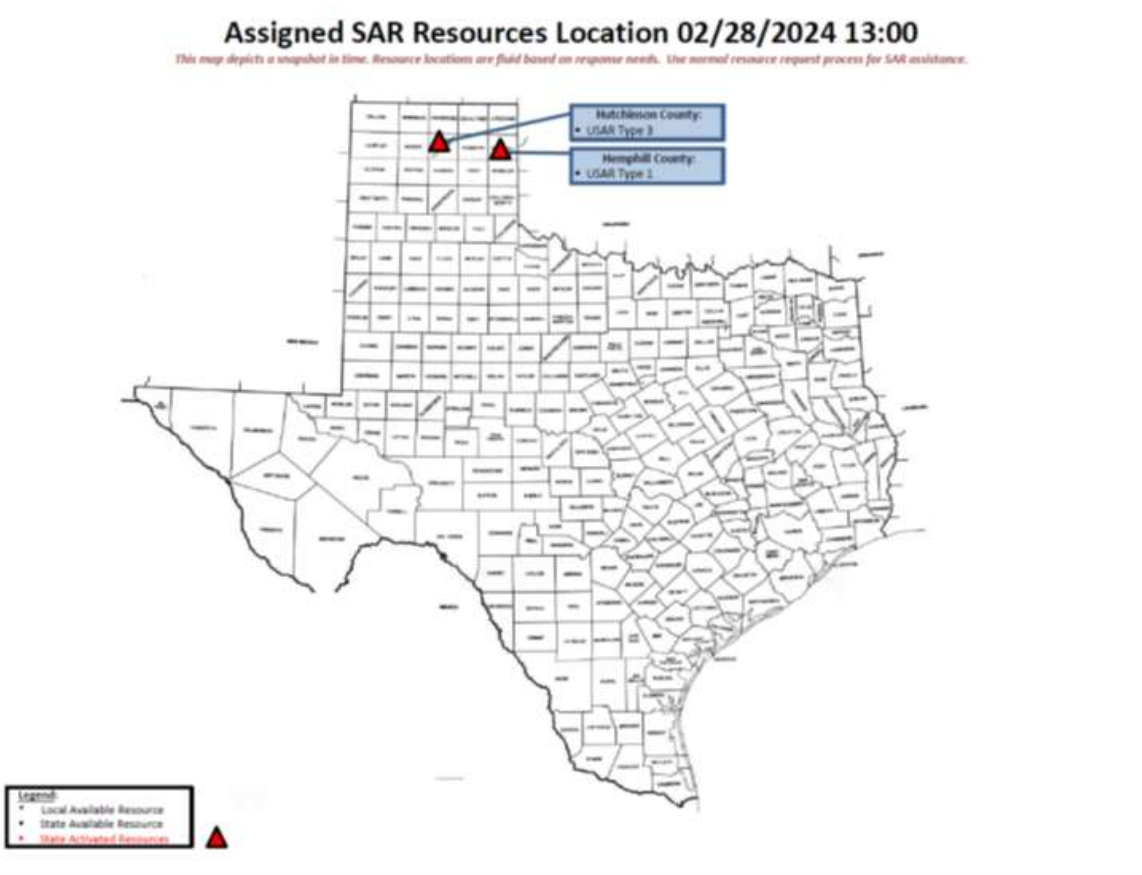
Cellular partners and Communications platform owners are aware of the situation and are standing by to provide mobile support resources. Other Private Sector Partners have reached out to offer assistance and resources.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service (AgriLife): A request was submitted on behalf of the Gray County Judge by AgriLife SOC Liaison Officer (LNO). The request was for Disaster, Assessment and Recovery (DAR) Agents to stand up and staff an Animal Supply Point and Shelter in response to the wildfires in the Texas Panhandle. AgriLife Extension Liaisons have participated in situational weather awareness call, tactics, and Industry stakeholder coordination call.

Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX/TX-PWRT): TX-PWRT will support local jurisdictions for Wildfire response in the Texas Panhandle. A SOC LNO has been assigned to support, monitor requests, and coordinate operations. Two TX-PWRT strike teams are responding to TDEM Region 1 to stage for Public Works assistance and one TX-PWRT lead is on site in Canyon (TDEM Region 1 District 1 DDEOC).

Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) Texas Task Force 1 (TEEX/TX-TF1) and Texas Task Force 2 (TEEX/TX-TF2): On February 28, TEEX activated TX-TF1 Type 1 Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) and Texas Task Force 2 (TX-TF2) Type 3 US&R teams to assist with any search and rescue requests.

TX-TF1 and TX-TF2 will monitor fire conditions within the state and Task Force Leaders will maintain contact with local and state partners within their assigned region. There are eight canine search specialists with six Live Find (LF) and six Human Remains Detection (HRD) canines are included in the activated task forces. There are currently 128 personnel assigned to this activation.



Texas A&M Forest Service (TAMFS): Local and State firefighters continue suppression efforts on several large wildfires burning across the Texas Panhandle. Strong winds, dry conditions, and warm temperatures contribute to active fire behavior and growth.

Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC): On February 28, the TAHC staffed the SOC with one LNO. The TAHC Amarillo Regional Manager, Livestock Inspectors, and Veterinarians are positions across the region to address animal issues.

TAHC has begun daily coordination calls with industry stakeholders to discuss animal needs, disposal, and documentation of losses. Initial animal assessments will begin once the fires are controlled and safe to enter the area. TAHC is working with other state partners to ensure state resources are allocated to livestock producers as needed.

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ): TCEQ has staff available to respond to any air/water/waste issues including drinking water and wastewater or emergency response. Staff are available for technical assistance on carcass disposal.

Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS): DPS personnel have responded to the wildfires in the Amarillo Region to aid in evacuations, road closures, and traffic control. Texas Highway Patrol (THP) Troopers responded to Hemphill, Hutchinson, Gray, and Wheeler Counties to assist local jurisdictions. DPS Criminal Investigation Division (CID) Agents responded to Hutchinson County to support local jurisdictions.

The DPS Aviation Operations Division received a request to conduct fire mapping and IR data for Panhandle. An additional request was made for aerial reconnaissance of the area. To support these efforts, DPS Aviation deployed a liaison to the Amarillo DDEOC to provide real-time information.

Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT): All 25 districts are monitoring weather, fire, road conditions, and crews are ready to respond. The TxDOT Amarillo and Childress Districts are staffed to provide 24-hour operations to support fire response and incoming winter weather. A TxDOT LNO has been assigned to the SOC.

The Amarillo District crews have pretreated roadways for winter weather and over 1,100 gallons of fuel has been provided to firefighters and emergency responders. TxDOT crews are providing traffic control and assisting evacuation efforts by directing evacuees to shelter sites. TxDOT is using Dynamic Message Signs (DMS) to alert motorists of 'Critical Fire Danger' in impacted areas.

State Highway (SH) 136 remains closed due to heavy smoke and low visibility. All other major highways are open and flowing, however, low visibility continues to impact United States Highway (US) 60, US-83, SH-33, and several Farm to Market (FM) & Ranch to Market (RM) roads. Motorists are encouraged to drive with caution and check DriveTX.org for the most current road conditions, visibility warnings and road closures.

Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS): On February 28, the State Medical Operations Center (SMOC) was activated due to the wildfire activity in TDEM Region 1. Numerous evacuations of residents, nursing homes, assisted living centers and hospitals have been conducted. Pantex activities are being monitored by their Radiation Section.

DSHS Texas Emergency Medical Task Force (DSHS/EMTF):

On February 28, Three Wildland Fire Support Packages are enroute to Amarillo and will be assigned to Hutchinson, Moore, and Randal Counties. An AMBUS is enroute to Amarillo to support local hospitals and one Medical Incident Support Team to the SOC.

Texas Military Department (TMD): TMD will support Texas A&M Forest Service (TAMFS) with wildland fire suppression. TMD has activated one CH-47 helicopter crew to provide direct support to TAMFS with aerial fire suppression and a six-person support team has been sent to staff the SOC.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD): TPWD has Texas Game Wardens and State Park Police Officers are prepared to respond to areas affected by the wildfires in the Texas Panhandle and has the following Statewide resources available to support: One Liaison to the SOC, one LNO to the DDEOC Amarillo, 15 TPWD Game Wardens responding to affected areas and 15 4X4 vehicles.

TPWD Game Wardens are supporting the counties of Gray, Roberts, and Hemphill. Game Wardens are providing support with the mandatory evacuation of the town of Canadian. TPWD is assisting with security and roadblocks with DPS. TPWD will maintain contact with local and state partners within the affected areas.

Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC): On February 28, HHSC has one liaison at the SOC and the 2-1-1 Texas Information and Referral Network is distributing relevant information about disaster response, including shelter locations.

American Red Cross (ARC): The ARC has responded to wildfires in the Panhandle. Due to the dynamic situation, some evacuation centers have been moved and others closed in response to evacuation orders. The ARC opened two shelters in Wellington and Boger. The American Red Cross and community partners have provided meals, snacks, and water.

On February 28, the evacuation center in Fritch closed and moved to the Borger shelter. The evacuation centers in Childress and Pampa were closed.

The Salvation Army (TSA): TSA Emergency Disaster Services (EDS) Team responded to Lefors, Texas, provided meals and hydration to the first responders. The Grape Vine Creek fire is no longer requesting support. The Smokehouse Creek fire in Hutchison County grew to include Gray and Roberts County, this resulted in numerous evacuation orders that resulted in several shelters to be opened. The First Baptist Church of Pampa opened a shelter and TSA EDS Team provided meals, hydration, and snacks to approximately 50 people. Meals were also provided to the City of Pampa EOC.

STATE RESOURCES COMMITTED

Agency	Resource Kind and Type	Personnel	Equip	Status	Location
Agrilife	SOC LNO	2	0	Assigned	Austin/SOC
Agrilife	Administration	3	0	Assigned	College Station
AgriLife	Marketing and Communications PIO	1	0	Assigned	College Station
AgriLife	DAR Agents	9	0	Assigned	Pampa
TAMFS	TIFMAS Strike Team	15	5	Assigned	Carson
TAMFS	TIFMAS Strike Team	15	5	Assigned	Childress
TAMFS	TIFMAS Strike Team	15	5	Assigned	Collingsworth
TAMFS	TIFMAS Strike Team	15	5	Assigned	Gray
TAMFS	TIFMAS Strike Team	15	5	Assigned	Hemphill
TAMFS	TIFMAS Strike Team	15	5	Assigned	Hutchinson
TAMFS	TIFMAS Strike Team	15	5	Assigned	Ochiltree
TAMFS	TIFMAS Strike Team	15	5	Assigned	Oldham
TAMFS	TIFMAS Strike Team	15	5	Assigned	Potter
TAMFS	TIFMAS Strike Team	15	5	Assigned	Randall
TAMFS	TIFMAS Strike Team	15	5	Assigned	Wheeler
TEEX/TX-PWRT	SOC Support	1	1	Assigned	Austin/SOC
TEEX/TX-PWRT	Strike Teams	9	4	En-route	Amarillo

Agency	Resource Kind and Type	Personnel	Equip	Status	Location
TEEX/TX-PWRT	DDEOC Members	1	1	Assigned	Canyon
TEEX TX-TF1	Type 1 US&R	71	20	Assigned	Hemphill County
TEEX TX-TF1	Type 3 US&R	47	13	Assigned	Hutchinson County
TEEX TX-TF1	ESF 9	9	0	Assigned	Brazos County
TEEX TX-TF1	ESF 9 SOC LNO	1	0	Assigned	Austin/SOC
TAHC	SOC LNO	1	0	Assigned	Austin/SOC
TAHC	Emergency Management	2	0	Assigned	Virtual
TAHC	Policy	3	0	Assigned	Virtual
TAHC	Regional Management	1	0	Assigned	Amarillo
TAHC	Veterinarian	1	0	Assigned	Amarillo
TAHC	Communications	2	0	Assigned	Virtual
DPS	SOC LNO	2	2	Assigned	Austin/SOC
DPS	Helicopter	1	1	Assigned	Amarillo
DPS	Troopers	25	25	Assigned	Hutchinson, Gray, Wheeler, Carson, Potter
DPS	CID Agents	13	13	Assigned	Hutchinson
TxDOT	SOC Liaison	1	0	Assigned	SOC
TxDOT	Amarillo District	69	47	Assigned	AMA District area
TxDOT	Childress District	25	30	Assigned	CHS District area
TxDOT	EMC	1	0	Assigned	TxDOT HQ
DSHS EMTF	Wildland Support Package	3	1	Enroute	Hutchinson County
DSHS EMTF	Wildland Support Package	3	1	Enroute	Moore County
DSHS EMTF	Wildland Support Package	3	1	Enroute	Randall County
DSHS EMTF	AMBUS	1	1	Enroute	Amarillo
DSHS EMTF	1 MIST	1	0	Assigned	Austin/SOC

Agency	Resource Kind and Type	Personnel	Equip	Status	Location
DSHS	SOC LNO	1	0	Assigned	Austin/SOC
HHSC	SOC LNO	1	0	Assigned	Austin/SOC
TMD	CH 47	10	1	Assigned	Grand Prairie
TMD	SOC Support Team	6	0	Assigned	Austin/SOC
TPWD	SOC LNO	1	1	Assigned	Austin/SOC
TPWD	DDOEC LNO	1	1	Assigned	Amarillo
TPWD	Game Wardens	15	15	Assigned	TDEM Region 1

FINAL COMMENTS: The State Operations Center (SOC) is at Level II (Escalated Response Conditions). The Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) continues to monitor the situation and will provide additional situation reports as needed.

The four levels of SOC activation are:

- Level I (Emergency Conditions)
- Level II (Escalated Response Conditions)
- Level III (Increased Readiness Conditions)
- Level IV (Normal Conditions)

*This Situation Report can be found on the TDEM webpage at:
<https://tdem.texas.gov/response/state-operations-center#tab-2>*

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