



# The Methodology for Examining and Reporting on Emergency Communication Systems and Their Utilization

March 31, 2022

Members of the Legislative Audit Committee:

In accordance with Senate Bill 1 (87th Legislature, Regular Session)<sup>1</sup>, the Texas Emergency Management Council (TEMC) and the State Auditor's Office (SAO) have developed a methodology for examining and reporting on emergency communication systems and their utilization across Texas from January 1, 2017, through December 31, 2021 (see the Attachment for more information about Senate Bill 1).

**To address the requirements of Senate Bill 1, the State Auditor's Office will conduct a statewide survey and summarize those results.** The Web-based, statewide survey will be distributed to (1) Texas counties, (2) municipalities, (3) independent school districts, (4) special purpose districts, (5) other local government entities, and (6) utility providers.

## Background

Senate Bill 1 (87th Legislature, Regular Session) requires that by March 31, 2022, the Texas Emergency Management Council and the State Auditor's Office shall develop a methodology for examining and reporting on local emergency communication systems in Texas.

Senate Bill 1 also requires a report of the results on or before November 1, 2022.

The statewide survey will be designed to collect information and other feedback on the following topics related to the emergency management communications:

- The entities' current emergency communication capacities, including method(s) of communication, percentage of constituents or customers reached, deployment time, and process for deployment.
- The actual usage of emergency communications by local government entities and utility providers between January 1, 2017, through December 31, 2021, including the types of events in which emergency communications were deployed.
- Gaps in emergency communication capacity, including particular groups or classes of Texans not effectively reached in past emergencies; communication methods unable to operate effectively in certain types of emergencies; and language and information barriers that preclude effective communication.

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<sup>1</sup> The requirements in Senate Bill 1 were incorporated into the General Appropriations Act (87th Legislature).

The survey will request information specific to emergency communications related to Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Imelda, the Odessa shooting, Winter Storm Uri, the Intercontinental Terminals Company Deer Park fire, and the Texas Petrochemicals Group Port Neches plant fire and explosion. The State Auditor's Office will obtain and summarize the responses received to the statewide survey and that summary analysis will be included in the published report.

The methodology described in this report is subject to change, as necessary, to ensure that the State Auditor's Office can compile and analyze the information relating to emergency communications to be included in the report as required by Senate Bill 1.

The State Auditor's Office appreciates TEMC's collaboration with developing survey questions, identifying survey recipients, and providing information regarding disaster processes and terminology.

Additionally, the State Auditor's Office appreciates the assistance and cooperation provided by counties, municipalities, the Texas State School Safety Center, and utility providers that were contacted during the development of this methodology.

Sincerely,

Lisa R. Collier, CPA, CFE, CIDA  
State Auditor

Attachment

cc: The Honorable Greg Abbott, Governor  
Mr. W. Nim Kidd, Chief of the Texas Division of Emergency Management

#### Disaster Background

**Hurricane Harvey** was a category 4 hurricane that made landfall along the middle Texas coast in August 2017.

**Hurricane Imelda** was a tropical cyclone that made landfall near Freeport, Texas, in September 2019.

**The Odessa Shooting** took place on August 31, 2019, when a gunman shot multiple people while driving through the cities of Midland and Odessa.

**Winter Storm Uri** was a widespread severe winter weather storm that took place across Texas in February 2021.

**The Intercontinental Terminals Company Deer Park Fire** occurred on March 17, 2019, when a fire erupted at the Intercontinental Terminals Company and burned for three days.

**The Texas Petrochemicals Group Port Neches Plant Fire and Explosion** was a chemical plant explosion and long burning fire that began on November 27, 2019.

Sources: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Department of Public Safety, the Office of the Comptroller of Public Accounts, and the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board.



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# Attachment

## ***Excerpt from Senate Bill 1 (87th Legislature, Regular Session), Related to the Texas Emergency Management Council and the State Auditor's Office Examining and Reporting on Emergency Communication Systems and Their Utilization***

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### **10. Audit Plan for Local Emergency Communication Systems.**

(a) By March 31, 2022, the Texas Emergency Management Council and the State Auditor's Office shall develop a methodology for an audit examining and reporting on emergency communications systems and their utilization by Texas counties, municipalities, independent school districts, special purpose districts, other local government entities, and utilities. The audit shall examine the five-year period from calendar years 2017-2021. The audit shall provide a broad and comprehensive review of the policies, practices, and capabilities of these entities regarding emergency communications. The audit shall also include an evaluation of the emergency communications tools available to local government entities and utilities and their effectiveness and limitation in reaching the desired audience in an effective and timely fashion. The audit shall address and examine:

- (1) the entities' current emergency communication capacities including: method(s) of communication, percentage of constituents or customers reached, deployment time, and process for deployment;
- (2) actual usage of emergency communications by local government entities and utilities during this time period, including types of events in which emergency communications are deployed;
- (3) gaps in emergency communication capacity including: particular groups or classes of Texans who are not effectively reached by current communications systems, communication methods unable to operate effectively in certain types of emergencies, and language and information barriers that preclude effective communication.

(b) In developing the audit, the State Auditor's Office shall compile and analyze information relating to emergency communications for, but not limited to, Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Imelda, the Odessa shooting, Winter Storm Uri, the Intercontinental Terminals Company Deer Park fire, and the Texas Petrochemicals Group Port Neches plant fire and explosion.

(c) A report of the audit and results shall be filed with all members of the legislature who sit on a committee with oversight responsibility for any entity or program that is the subject of any portion of the report. The report shall be delivered on or before November 1, 2022.

(d) The Texas Emergency Management Council shall coordinate with governmental agencies, municipalities and counties to use information and data those entities may already possess, including from a previously completed or currently contracted comparable audit. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Texas Emergency Management Council shall not be limited to using existing data or any specific sources for relevant data and the Texas Emergency Management Council is directed to use all reasonable efforts to obtain relevant data from any and all sources, including publicly available data and data provided to and/or by educational and non-profit entities.