

# Preparing for & Responding to Texas Public Health Emergencies

Joint Hearing of  
House Committee on Defense Affairs &  
State-Federal Relations

House Committee on Public Health  
February 5, 2008

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Commissioner



# State of Texas Emergency Response

**Governor**

**Office of Homeland Security**

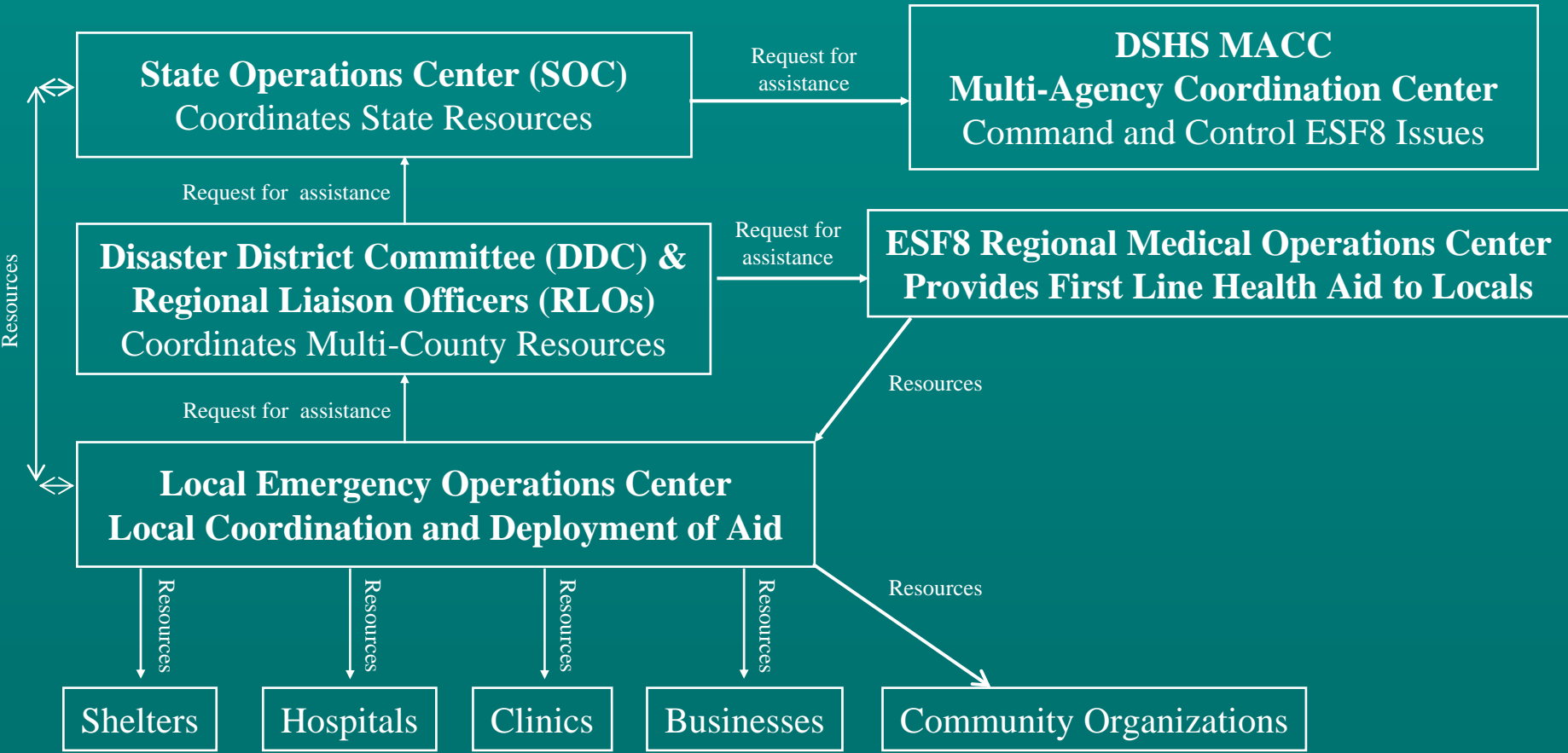
**Governor's Division of Emergency Management**

**DSHS (Health & Medical Services)**

DSHS responsibilities include:

- assisting medical special needs population
- coordinating public health & medical services
- radiation response

# Health and Medical (ESF8) Disaster Response Structure



# Keys to Effective Public Health Preparedness

- **All hazards planning at all levels - state, regional, local government, business, family**
  - Texas Homeland Security Strategic Plan
- **Training & exercises**
  - Planning alone is insufficient
- **Integration at all levels**
  - Local officials must be supported at regional, state & national levels
  - Support local health department capacity
- **Coordinated communications**
- **Community and family preparedness**

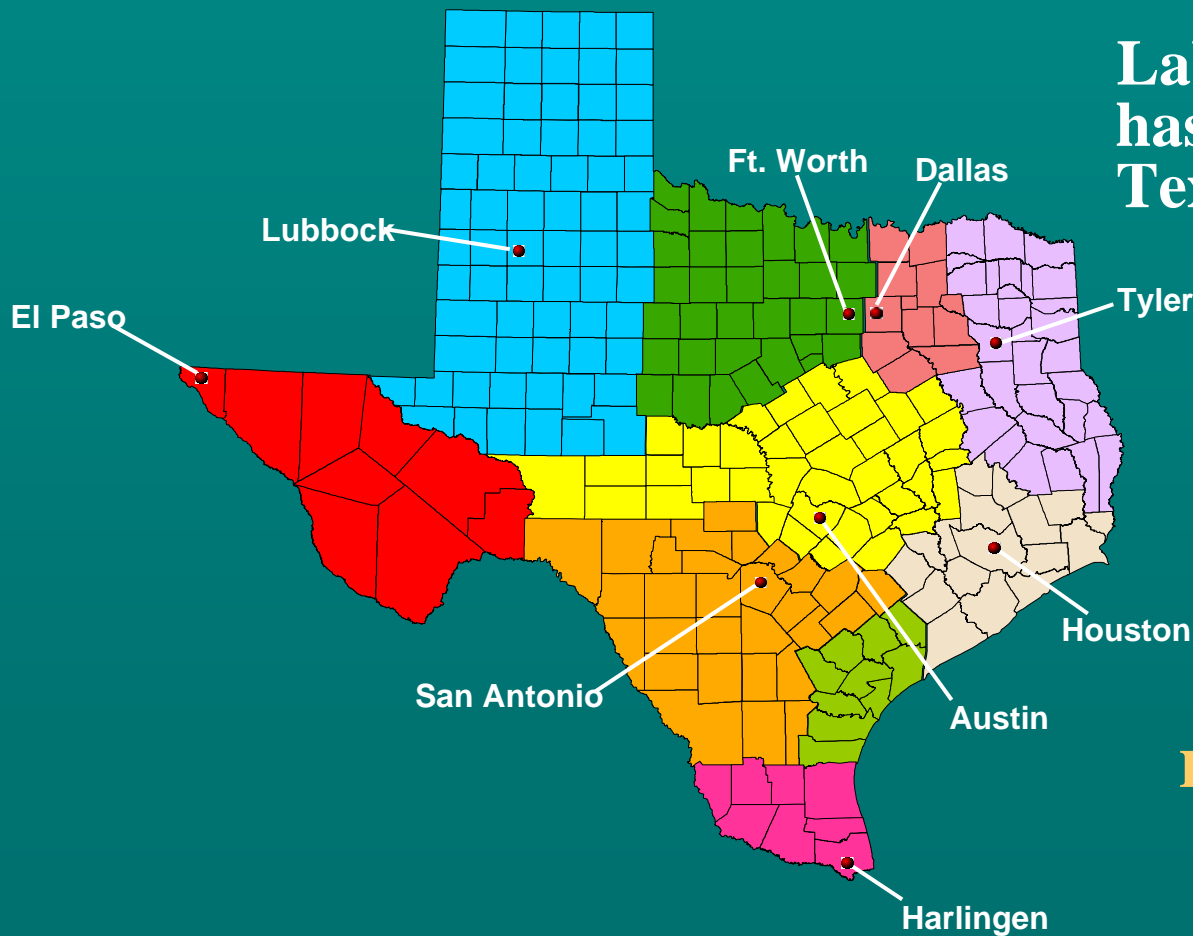
# Successes in Public Health Preparedness

- CDC rated Texas' SNS readiness and ability at 97
- CDC recommended other states adopt Texas Pan Flu Plans for communications and antiviral distribution
- Enhanced disease surveillance with primary care providers



- Coordination with CDC & others at ports of entry
- \$10 million GR for purchase of 677,000 antiviral courses

# Successes in Public Health Preparedness



**Lab Response Network  
has 9 facilities across  
Texas**

**Laboratories with Rapid  
H5 Flu Testing**

# **Additional Planning and Preparation**

- **“Ready or Not?” Media Campaign**
- **Medical Special Needs**
- **EMS Response Capacity**



**READY  
OR NOT?**

**HAVE A PLAN**

## **“Ready or Not?” Media Campaign**

### **3 Waves:**

**General Awareness – Fall**

**Pandemic Flu Awareness – Winter**

**Hurricane Preparedness – Spring**

[www.TexasPrepares.org](http://www.TexasPrepares.org)



# TexasPrepares.org



HAVE A PLAN

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**My Commitment**  
A Promise to Prepare

**Family**  
Make a Plan

**Essentials**  
Build a Kit

**Information**  
Learn About Disasters

**Share**  
Tell Friends and Family

## ARE YOU READY - OR NOT?

When disaster hits, Texans need to be ready. Follow our simple step-by-step online guide to building your plan—including family strategies, handy checklists, and special needs considerations for the disabled, the elderly and pets. If you can't easily answer these three key questions, make your plan today.

Your browser must be set to accept "cookies" in order to use this site. See your browser's Help file if you need more information.



### FAMILY

Do you know where you will find your loved ones?

[LEARN MORE ABOUT FAMILY](#)



### ESSENTIALS

Do you have essentials, such as water and medication?

[LEARN MORE ABOUT ESSENTIALS](#)



### INFORMATION

Do you know how you will get trusted information?

[LEARN MORE ABOUT INFORMATION](#)



### MAKE YOUR PLAN

Start creating your family's emergency preparedness plan today.

[GET STARTED](#)



### Emergency Preparedness Video - 5:38

If disaster strikes, what can you do to protect yourself and your family? Watch this video and put these tips into practice to make your plan today.

# Medical Special Needs: Human Resources

- **Volunteers**

- Texas Volunteer Registry is web-based system to identify state medical & lay volunteers, and verify credentials, qualifications
- Developed to consider volunteer liability
- Launch by March 2008

- **Medical Reserve Corps:**

- A national network of doctors, nurses and other medical professionals who have volunteered to help respond to emergencies at the local level
- Currently, there are 24 MRCs in Texas

# Medical Special Needs: Equipment

- **Jump Bags**: Created 150 Medical Special Needs “Jump Bags” to provide medical professionals with necessary medical equipment & supplies to care for MSN patients during evacuations
- **Push Packs**: Developed *Push Packs*” for shelters with necessary medical equipment & supplies to sustain 10,000 people for 3 days



# Medical Special Needs: Shelters

- **Medical Special Needs HUBS**
  - 17 HUB Cities across Texas serve as reception points for all-hazard triage for medical care, shelter, and other needs



- **With CDC funds, DSHS is evaluating the purchase of trailers to create:**
  - Two 250-bed mobile medical special needs shelters
  - Two 100-bed mobile pediatric medical special needs shelters

# Increased EMS Response Capacity

- DSHS is working to increase EMS response capacity to support local needs.
- Partnerships with neighboring states to share EMS resources across state lines.
- Texas can activate national contracts for ambulances and other vehicles to evacuate medical special needs individuals.



# Challenges in Public Health Preparedness



- **Size of Texas**
- **International Border with Mexico**
- **Texas: A Local Control State**

# Challenges in Public Health Preparedness

- **Reductions in federal funding for public health preparedness**
  - **\$36 million in federal FY 2008 public health preparedness funding.**
  - **\$30 million in federal FY 2008 hospital preparedness funding.**
  - **Provides funds for state, regional and local preparedness activities.**
  - **Expected reduction of 10-12% in both funds for FY 2009.**
  - **Will work with stakeholders to plan/prioritize for expected reductions.**

# Challenges in Public Health Preparedness

- **Unique characteristics of Pandemic Flu**
  - **Pervasive**
  - **Prolonged**
  - **COOP challenges**
  - **Social distancing strategies required**
  - **Laws governing social distancing policies may require legislative review**



# Concluding Thoughts

- **We continue to make significant progress in our preparedness efforts**
- **We are partnering with not only federal, state & local governments and organizations, but also with private sector**
- **We must sustain public health capacity to effectively respond to any natural or man-made disaster**
- **We must manage critical funding challenges**