



Texas Division of Emergency Management State Situation Report

New Information in Blue Text

Event Name	24-0001 Wildfire Season 2024
Date	March 2, 2024
Time	10:00 AM
Operational Period	8:00 AM March 1 to 8:00 AM March 2, 2024
Report Number	3

Regions Affected

TDEM Regions Affected	1
DDs Active	1, 2

STATEWIDE CURRENT SITUATION:

On March 1, Governor Abbott held a briefing with state and local officials and provided an update on the state's ongoing response to wildfires impacting Texans and communities across Texas during a press conference in Borger.

During the press conference, the Governor offered the full support of the State of Texas to impacted communities as they continue to experience dangerous wildfire conditions. Additionally, the Governor highlighted the extensive work state and local officials and emergency response personnel have done to respond to wildfire activity throughout the Panhandle region and provide assistance. The Governor also addressed Texas' plan to expand air support and debris removal services in affected regions as dangerous weather threats persist in the coming days.

The Governor was joined at the briefing and press conference by Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) Chief Nim Kidd, Congressman Ronny Jackson, State Senator Charles Perry, State Representative Four Price, State Representative John Smithee, Texas A&M Forest Service (TAMFS) Director Al Davis, Borger Mayor Karen Felker, Hutchinson County Judge Cindy Irwin, and other state and local officials.

On February 29, the Governor granted waivers for the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TxDMV), and Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) as Texas continues surging all available resources to support Texans and communities impacted by wildfires across the state.

Texans impacted by devastating wildfires are encouraged to complete TDEM's Individual State of Texas Assessment Tool (iSTAT) self-reporting damage survey to help state and local officials identify damages and determine the state's eligibility for federal disaster assistance. The survey is available in both English and Spanish and can be accessed by visiting: damage.tdem.texas.gov.

Information provided in the self-reported damage assessment surveys help emergency management officials identify any immediate resource needs and understand the extent of damage that has occurred. Survey information also aids officials in determining the state's eligibility for various forms of federal disaster assistance. Reporting damage through the iSTAT tool is a voluntary activity and is not a substitute for reporting damage to your insurance agency. It does not guarantee disaster assistance.

Texans are urged to heed guidance from their local officials, limit activities that may cause sparks or flames, and keep emergency supplies easily accessible. Texans can visit TexasReady.gov for wildfire tips, tfsweb.tamu.edu for safety information, and tdem.texas.gov to report wildfire damage.

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.

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)

Disaster District (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: A Disaster Declaration was issued for the entire county by the County Judge on February 28.

Childress County: Evacuated livestock are being housed at the Mashburn Event Center.

Gray County: Gray County issued a disaster declaration on February 28. [County officials submitted a Disaster Summary Outline to TDEM on March 1.](#) 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 Grapevine Creek Fire has burned 30,000 acres and is 60% contained.

Hemphill County: Hemphill County issued a disaster declaration on February 27. The shelter at the high school in Canadian closed on February 29.

Hutchinson County: [The County Judge issued a Disaster Declaration on February 27, and submitted a Disaster Summary Outline to TDEM on March 1.](#) A request for a Fire Management Assistant 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 at the Johnson Park Youth Center in Borger remains open.

The 687 Reamer Fire burned 2,000 acres before joining the Smokehouse Creek Fire, 14 homes and seven outbuildings have been lost with 10% containment.

The Smokehouse Creek Fire has burned 1,078,086 acres with 3% containment. The cities of Canadian, Miami, and Skellytown have been secured with both fire lines and blackline fire breaks. The city of Glazier remains under a mandatory evacuation for all occupants.

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 burned 142,000 acres with 55% containment.

Ochiltree County: Mandatory evacuation orders remain in effect 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 burned 2,500 acres with 40% 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 was 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: [Wheeler County Judge issued a disaster declaration on February 29](#). The shelter in Wheeler was relocated to the Childress City Auditorium in Childress.

RESPONDING STATE AGENCIES/ORGANIZATIONS REPORTS

Texas Division of Emergency Management, Texas A&M University System (TDEM): [TDEM collaborated with Mass Care and Boeing to help them with a proposed monetary donation for the wildland fire response. Texas Oil and Gas Association \(TXOGA\) met with TDEM representatives to strengthen situational awareness for refineries located in the panhandle. TDEM alongside AgriLife contacted feed companies and big box retailers for donated resources designated for incident recovery. Private sector partners continue to be supplied with updates to provide situational awareness.](#)

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 the Texas Food and Fuel Association to secure fuel in affected areas. TDEM

continues working with Mass Care and HEB to aid them in maximizing their planned donations for the affected area and coordinating with Walmart regarding 4 associates that have been affected by the wildfire in Fritch. Worked with Walgreens to get them evacuation information on the Smokehouse Creek Fire. Connected United Supermarkets with American Red Cross to support donations.

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.

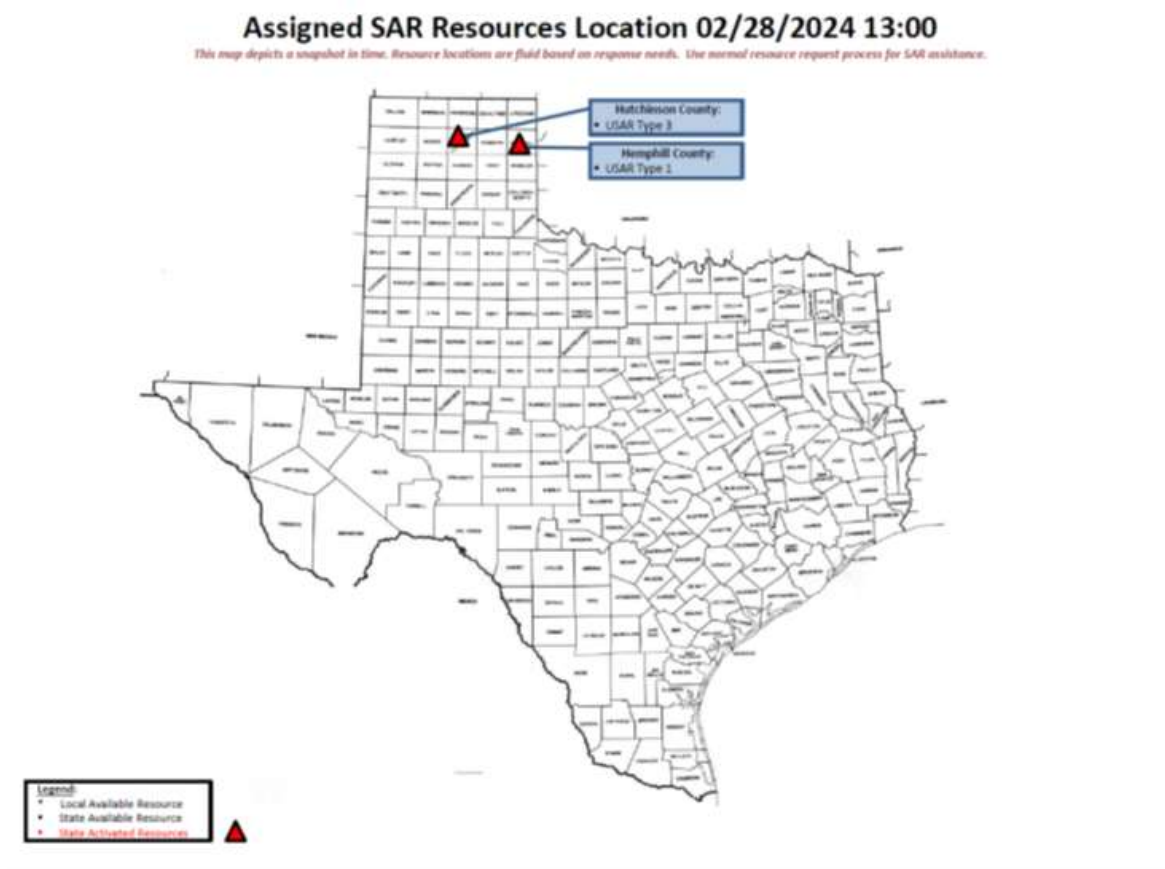
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service (AgriLife): AgriLife agents arrived and will be assisting TAMFS and seven (7) County Extension Agents to undertake damage assessments. AgriLife is coordinating with Texas Search and Rescue (TEXSAR) to bring in donation management teams to augment existing AgriLife representatives at Hemphill and Hutchinson Animal Supply Points. A total of five (5) requests for AgriLife assistance have been received and were forwarded to local representatives to make contact with those affected landowners. 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. AgriLife agents are operating a shelter and food distribution of 109 round bales, and 80 50# feed bags were distributed.

Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX/TX-PWRT): Crews assigned to Fritch have completed their mission of shutting off water to 200 affected connections and will now address a water main leak due to equipment affecting the pipeline. Crews will deploy to Canadian to address issue identified by local officials. TX-PWRT reached out to other jurisdictions for requests for assistance. TX-PWRT has deployed (2) additional Strike Teams consisting of ten (10) personnel to TDEM Region 1 from College Station.

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): Current damage observations are a total of 942 structures observed, 380 are classified as destroyed. 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.



Texas A&M Forest Service (TAMFS): Three Large Air Tankers (LAT) were requested and have arrived in Abilene awaiting deployment to assist in fire control. 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): [TAHC is actively coordinating with state veterinarian offices in New Mexico and Oklahoma to facilitate documenting interstate movement for livestock producers. Four Livestock Inspectors have been rostered along with additional field staff to support surveillance and animal needs assessments with those scheduled to begin on March 1, in the cities of Canadian and Fritch. TAHC has begun to distribute animal agriculture focused publications addressing carcass disposal guidance, available state, and federal resources, and AgriLife supply point information.](#)

On February 28, the TAHC staffed the SOC with one LNO. The TAHC Amarillo Regional Manager, Livestock Inspectors, and Veterinarians are positioned across the region to address animal issues.

TAHC began conducting daily coordination calls with industry stakeholders on February 28 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. TAHC has deployed one veterinarian to Disaster District 1 for greater situational awareness.

See the [TAHC Natural Disasters webpage](#) for updated information and resources for the 2024 Texas Panhandle Wildfires.

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 [and temporary debris management operations.](#)

Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS): [The DPS Aviation Operations Division provided overhead support by flying the entire Smokehouse Fire area of operations from Pampa to Oklahoma. Information related to active fires and areas of smoke were relayed to field personnel for response. The Aviation Operations Division will continue providing aerial assistance as requested.](#)

[DPS personnel responded to the wildfires in the Amarillo Region to aid in evacuations, road closures, and traffic control. Texas Highway Patrol \(THP\) Troopers alongside local and county law enforcement continue with 24-hr security coverage for the city of Fritch. THP Troopers are conducting patrol duties and traffic control in Hemphill and Hutchinson Counties.](#)

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 1,460 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.

All 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) and Ranch to Market (RM) roads. Motorists are encouraged to drive with caution and check www.DriveTX.org for the most current road conditions, visibility warnings and road closures. RM-2277 is closed north of Borger due to downed power lines. State Highway (SH) 136 has reopened, however, lingering smoke and blowing snow causing low visibility. Low visibility from smoke and blowing snow continues impacting FM- 1342, FM-1920, IH-27, IH-40, RM-1321, SH-70, US-60, US-83, US-385 from the winter storm.

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):

[Three additional Wildland Fire Support Packages \(WLFS\) were deployed on March 1.](#) On February 28, three WLFS were deployed to Amarillo and will be assigned to Hutchinson, Moore, and Randal Counties.

Texas Military Department (TMD): [TMD will activate three \(3\) UH-60 and one additional Ch-47 on March 3. If deemed necessary, an unmanned aircraft is available on standby.](#) TMD will support 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 [supporting local partners in the affected areas](#) and State Park Police Officers are prepared to respond to areas affected by the wildfires in the Texas Panhandle. TPWD has the following statewide resources available to support: One Liaison to the SOC, one LNO to DDEOC - Amarillo, 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 coordinating with DPS with security and roadblocks. TPWD will maintain contact with local and state partners within the affected areas.

Texas Game Wardens have been supporting Texas Task Force 2 in Search and Rescue efforts.

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. One previously evacuated nursing facility and assisted living facility have been repopulated.

Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR): TDLR staff are at the SOC and stand ready to assist as requested.

American Red Cross (ARC): The American Red Cross has positioned a team of responders, including staff and volunteers, to assist with response and recovery efforts. ARC is supporting the Disaster Assistance Center by distributing sifters, blankets, teddy bears, snacks & water to community members. Disaster Emergency Supply Distribution will continue today at Fairlanes Baptist Church, 3000 Fairlanes Blvd, Borger 10am-4pm. Mobile supply distribution will begin when vehicles can safely access impacted areas.

The Southern Baptist of Texas Convention (SBTC): Assessors began damage assessments on March 1. A Quick Response Feeding Unit continues to support the operation. Total meals prepared: 351.

The Salvation Army (TSA): TSA Pampa and Borger Service Units are serving first responders and survivors with food, hydration and relief supplies in Carson, Gray, Hutchinson, and Roberts Counties. In-Kind donations are being accepted for specific items and will be handled locally. TSA continues to partner and collaborate with local community agencies as well as local and state emergency management.

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	7	0	Assigned	Pampa
AgriLife	DAR Agent	2	0	Assigned	Hemphill/VET Team
AgriLife	DAR Agents	2	0	Assigned	Hutchinson
AgriLife	DAR/CEA Agents	11	0	Enroute	Amarillo
TAMFS	TIFMAS Strike Team	225	75	Assigned	Panhandle
TAMFS	Hand Crews	16	2	Assigned	Panhandle

Agency	Resource Kind and Type	Personnel	Equip	Status	Location
TAMFS	TIFMAS Strike Team	180	60	Enroute	Panhandle
TAMFS	TIFMAS Strike Team	15	5	Assigned	Panhandle
TEEX TX-PWRT	SOC Support	1	1	Assigned	Austin/SOC
TEEX TX-PWRT	Strike Teams	11	5	Enroute	Amarillo
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	1	0	Assigned	Virtual
TAHC	Field Staff	2	2	Assigned	Pampa
TAHC	Policy	4	0	Assigned	Virtual
TAHC	Regional Management	1	1	Assigned	Amarillo
TAHC	Veterinarian	1	1	Assigned	Amarillo
TAHC	Communications	2	0	Assigned	Virtual
TAHC	Livestock Inspectors	4	4	Assigned	Canadian/Fritch
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	Troopers	15	15	Assigned	Hutchinson, Gray, Wheeler, Carson, Potter
DPS	CID Agents	13	13	Assigned	Hutchinson
TxDOT	SOC Liaison	1	0	Assigned	Austin/SOC
TxDOT	Amarillo District	18	11	Assigned	AMA District area
TxDOT	Childress District	25	30	Assigned	CHS District area
TxDOT	EMC	1	0	Assigned	TxDOT HQ

Agency	Resource Kind and Type	Personnel	Equip	Status	Location
DSHS EMTF	Wildland Support Package	5	1	Assigned	Hutchinson County
DSHS EMTF	Wildland Support Package	5	1	Assigned	Moore County
DSHS EMTF	Wildland Support Package	5	1	Assigned	Randall County
DSHS EMTF	Wildland Support Package	15	3	Enroute	DDEOC 1
DSHS EMTF	1 MIST	1	0	Assigned	Austin/SOC
DSHS	SOC LNO	1	0	Assigned	Austin/SOC
HHSC	SOC LNO	11	0	Assigned	Austin/SOC
TDLR	SOC Liason	1	0	Assigned	Austin/SOC
TMD	CH 47	10	1	Assigned	Grand Prairie
TMD	SOC Support Team	6	0	Assigned	Austin/SOC
TMD	LNO for TFS	1	0	Assigned	College Station
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-3>

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