



September 14th, 2026

Chairman King and Members
House Committee on State Affairs
Texas House of Representatives

RE: Written Testimony on Disaster Preparedness, Response and Recovery

Chairman King and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding disaster preparedness, response, and recovery in Texas.

Recent disasters have revealed legitimate needs involving training, public warnings, weather information, intergovernmental coordination, volunteer management, and mass-fatality operations. Texas should address those needs with practical reforms that improve outcomes without building an unnecessarily expansive regulatory system.

Emergency management personnel should understand incident command, flood risks, intergovernmental coordination, and recovery procedures. However, competency does not always require a new occupational license. Annual renewals, continuing-education mandates, fees, fingerprinting, and broadly defined disqualifications could prevent qualified individuals from serving, particularly in rural communities with limited personnel. Texas should recognize relevant military, professional, and out-of-state experience and reserve mandatory licensing for positions presenting a demonstrated risk that cannot be addressed through training or certification.

A statewide volunteer system may help officials identify trained personnel and coordinate assignments. It should not become a gatekeeper that prevents spontaneous volunteers from providing immediate assistance. Registration and background checks should be proportional to a volunteer's duties, with heightened screening reserved for sensitive positions. Low-risk volunteers should be deployable without delay when lives or property are threatened.

Private campgrounds and youth camps in flood-prone areas should maintain emergency plans and provide effective warning and evacuation procedures. State requirements should remain risk-based and outcome-focused, allowing operators to use different methods suited to their properties rather than imposing uniform equipment or construction mandates. Enforcement should include reasonable compliance periods and meaningful appeal rights.

Targeted, one-time appropriations for federal disaster matching funds, flood-warning infrastructure, weather monitoring, and forecasting may strengthen preparedness. Those expenditures should have defined purposes, measurable deliverables, public reporting, and independent auditing. Local cost participation should be required where appropriate, and temporary appropriations should not quietly become recurring state obligations.

After-action reports should identify what information officials possessed, which systems or procedures failed, how funds were used, and whether corrective actions were completed. The reports should be publicly accessible except for narrowly defined security-sensitive information.

Every new program, database, licensing system, advisory body, or regulatory authority created in response to a disaster should include a meaningful Sunset date. Emergencies should not become a standing justification for permanent government expansion without legislative review.

The Texas Liberty Compact calls for limited, transparent, and accountable government. Texas can improve preparedness by focusing on demonstrated capabilities, removing barriers during emergencies, protecting voluntary assistance, measuring results, and revisiting programs that fail to produce meaningful public benefits.

Thank you for your consideration.

For Liberty, For Texas!

Jeramy D. Kitchen
President | Texas Policy Research Action (TPRA)