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PUC RFI Project NO. 56822 Investigation of Emergency Preparedness and Response by Utilities in Houston and Surrounding Communities

City of Houston Item 28 Responses

City of Houston Contact:

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LG 1-1 Do you perform your own hurricane or major storm drills? Yes

If you do not, please provide a brief explanation of what your jurisdiction would need to start conducting these drills. If you do, please respond to the following questions:

a) How often do you conduct a drill? Annually

When did you last conduct a hurricane or major storm drill? April 30, 2024

b) Please describe the drill and provide information concerning the category of hurricane drilled and any conditions used in the drill.

A Mass Care and Sheltering Tabletop Exercise was conducted on April 30th. The drill was based on a Category 4 storm coming through the Houston Ship Channel, hitting the City as a Category 3. Also, the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) conducts an annual Hurricane Tabletop exercise.

c) Does your drill change? If so, how did your drill change from the last time you conducted a drill?

Yes, scenarios are updated to reflect the operational posture or to address capability gaps.

d) If you used one, please provide the name(s) of any third-party vendor used to assist or conduct the hurricane or major storm drill.

N/A

e) Please provide the name(s) of departments in your jurisdiction that participated or were invited to participate in the hurricane or major storm drill and describe their level of involvement with the drill.

City of Houston Office of Emergency Management, Houston Public Works, Houston Police Department, Houston Fire Department, Houston Public Health, Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, BARC, ARA, HPARD, Coalition for the Homeless, American Red Cross, and the Salvation Army. These entities were exercise participants.

f) Please provide the name(s) of other local governments and any local, community, or county organizations that participated or were invited to participate in the hurricane or major storm drill and describe their level of involvement with the drill.

National Weather Service, SETRAC, Metro, Harris Health, Montgomery County, Harris County, Fort Bend County, City of Pasadena, AgriLife/TEEX, TDEM. These entities were exercise participants.

g) Please provide the name(s) of any trade organization that participated or were invited to participate in the hurricane or major storm drill and describe their level of involvement with the drill.

The trade organizations that participated in our disaster drills included, The American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, Mercy Chefs/Hope City Church, Houston Food Bank, Coalition for the Homeless, METRO, Houston Response, Lakewood Church, YMCA, Latter Day Saints, Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD), Texas A&M Agrilife, and SETRAC.

The emphasis of the tabletop was for participants to update their capabilities to support Mass Care Response during a disaster including vulnerable populations and Disabilities Access and Functional Needs (DAFN) communities.

h) Please provide the name(s) of any utility company that participated or were invited to participate in the hurricane or major storm drill and describe their level of involvement with the drill.

CenterPoint

LG 1-2 Did AEP, CenterPoint, Entergy, TNMP or other electric, water, or sewer utilities request your participation in their 2024 hurricane or major storm drill?

No. The last participation in a hurricane preparedness exercise with CenterPoint was a panel discussion in May 2020.

If yes:

a) Please provide the name(s) of the requesting utility.

b) Please provide the date of the drill.

c) Please provide information concerning the category of hurricane drilled and any conditions used in the drill.

d) Please describe in detail your role and level of participation in the hurricane or major storm drill. In your response, please indicate the role played by individual city or county services.

e) Did you participate in a post-drill review with the organizing utility? If yes, please describe the post-drill review and what feedback you provided.

LG 1-3 If known, please provide the date the Texas Department of Emergency management contacted you concerning the May 2024 Derecho and Hurricane Beryl.

Derecho: May 16, 2024

Hurricane Beryl: Friday July 6, 2024

LG 1-4 If known, please provide the date your electric service provider contacted you concerning the May 2024 Derecho and Hurricane Beryl.

Derecho: May 16, 2024

Hurricane Beryl: Friday July 6, 2024

LG 1-5 Were you contacted by any water or sewer utilities concerning Hurricane Beryl? If so, please identify the utilities and provide the date the utility(s) contacted you. N/A this aspect is handled by another city department.

HPW (water and wastewater utility) is the largest regional/Houston Area water and wastewater utility and is a COH department.

- Derecho notifications to COH OEM and citywide leadership
 - Initial notification on Tuesday 5/14 (potential for heavy rain and severe weather), Derecho occurred on Thursday 5/16 early evening.
 - HPW sent a total of 13 SitReps/status reports to OEM and citywide leadership throughout the event 5/14 through 5/22 (substantial power restoration completed)
 - SitReps included items impacted by the power outages including status of the water and wastewater systems, traffic signals and mobility, facilities, etc.
 - HPW staffed the COH EOC Thursday 5/16 in the evening throughout the entire event/EOC activation
- Hurricane Beryl notifications to COH OEM and citywide leadership
 - Initial notification on Friday 6/28 (tracking a system in the Caribbean Sea), Beryl landfall on 7/7/24 late pm into 7/8/24 early am
 - HPW sent a total of 15 SitReps/status reports to OEM and citywide leadership throughout the event 6/28 through 7/16/24 (substantial power restoration completed)
 - SitReps included items impacted by the power outages including status of the water and wastewater systems, traffic signals and mobility, facilities, etc..
 - HPW staffed the COH EOC 7/7/24 through 7/16/24 throughout the entire event/EOC activation
- During both activations HPW notified COH OEM and CenterPoint of all critical infrastructure impacted by power outages.
 - Derecho – 5/14/22 through 5/22/14
 - Beryl – 6/28/24 through 7/16/24
 - COH OEM and CenterPoint were notified numerous times via email, phone calls, text messages, and in person meetings/discussion at the COH EOC.
 - Note: CenterPoint was present at COH OEM EOC during both activations
 - Derecho – 5/16 through 5/22
 - Beryl – 7/7 through 7/16

LG 1-6 To the best of your ability, please provide a timeline of communications between local officials and the utility(s) identified in Staff 1-4 and Staff 1-5 concerning the May 2024 Derecho and Hurricane Beryl.

- CenterPoint was notified numerous times via email, phone calls, text messages, and in person meetings/discussion at the COH EOC.
 - Note: CenterPoint was present at COH OEM EOC during both activations, and they received real-time information and requests.
 - Derecho – 5/16 through 5/22
 - Beryl – 7/7 through 7/16
- See above LG1-5.

LG 1-7 Do you consult or coordinate with utilities about storm hardening within your jurisdiction or help to identify utility infrastructure that needs to be repaired before the start of the hurricane season? If yes:

Currently, OEM does not, but this will be something we will address in the future.

- At least annually, HPW provides CenterPoint a priority list of critical facilities.
 - Large drinking water facilities, locations, ESI/CP meter numbers (allows them to track via smart meters), “why” the facility is important, onsite standby by generation present, etc.
 - Large wastewater facilities
 - HPW maintenance facilities
- HPW experienced, learned from, and implemented numerous corrective actions from the Feb 2021 Winter Storm (Uri).
 - Onsite standby power generation: HPW implemented and continue to execute a very robust generator maintenance and testing program. As a result, HPW was able to be self sufficient and maintain the potable water system.
 - Facility preparedness: HPW transition day to day facility maintenance from GSD to our own/HPW full-service maintenance contract with TD Industries. As a result, HPW facilities were able to maintain COOP essential functions.
 - Critical supplies/chemicals: state law requires HPW/drinking water utilities to maintain a 15-day onsite inventory of critical supplies/chemicals. As a result, HPW was able to maintain COOP essential functions.

a) Please identify the utilities you consulted or coordinated with in 2023 or 2024 and the approximate date you last consulted or coordinated with them.

b) Please describe the extent of your consultation or coordination.

c) How often do you consult with utilities about electric distribution and transmission equipment (e.g., powerlines, poles, reclosers, transformers) with regarding strategy or prioritization of repairs and replacement of equipment?

LG 1-8 Please provide a list of local ordinances, protocols, or policies concerning transportation of heavy equipment through your jurisdiction.

The City of Houston does not have ordinances or policies that govern the transport of heavy equipment through the jurisdiction. It is our understanding that the Texas Department of Transportation has governance over such transportation.

a) For each of the identified ordinances, protocols, or policies, what is the typical turn-around time from receipt of a request to issuance of a permit? N/A

b) Please describe, at a high level, the permitting process for the identified ordinances, protocols, or policies. N/A

c) For each identified ordinance, protocol, or policy, provide the length of time the obtained permit remains valid and enforceable. N/A

d) Did your jurisdiction waive compliance with any of these ordinances during either the May 2024 Derecho or Hurricane Beryl? If so, please identify which ordinances were waived and for how long the waivers remained in effect. N/A

LG 1-9 Please identify any specific issues that stand out to you concerning the deployment of mobile generation facilities during the May 2024 Derecho and Hurricane Beryl.

- The Derecho in May was more of an isolated event in NW Harris County and Houston. Therefore, all of CP's resources were focused in a smaller area, when compared to Beryl. Therefore, CP's mobile generator we used throughout the city and county to support critical infrastructure, including two Houston Public Works facilities.
- Beryl impacted a much larger area. Houston Public Works did not receive the same support from the CP generators.

LG 1-10 Please provide a list of local ordinances, protocols, or policies concerning vegetation management, including any restrictions on the size of utility easements or utility rights-of-way.

N/A

LG 1-11 Please provide a description of any process by which an electric or telecommunications utility may petition the local government to remove dead or damaged trees or branches near, but not within, a utility easement or utility right-of-way.

The City currently does not have such a process.

LG 1-12 Please provide a list of local ordinances, protocols, or policies that require a property owner to remove dead trees on their property.

N/A

a) Does your jurisdiction have an individual or group that oversees any program related to these ordinances, protocols, or policies? Administration and Regulatory Affairs and Houston Public Works

b) How often are properties inspected for compliance with the identified ordinances, protocols, or policies? Please include the date and zip codes for any inspections conducted from January 1, 2024 through June 30,2024.

N/A

c) Do you coordinate with utilities about the results of these inspections? If yes, please indicate the last date and nature of such coordination that occurred before July 8,2024.

N/A

LG 1-13 Do you have a trained arborist on staff? If yes, please describe and define their duties before and after a major storm event.

Yes, Houston Parks and Recreation Department has an arborist on staff. Focuses only on COH owned property.

LG 1-14 Do you maintain a list of critical infrastructure (e.g., telecommunication systems, police stations, water or sewer facilities), medical and eldercare facilities (e.g., hospitals, in-patient treatment facilities, nursing homes, assisted living facilities), or community centers and organizations (e.g., churches, homeless shelters, schools, daycares) within your area?

Yes.

If yes:

a) Did your jurisdiction share this information with TDEM or any utility(s) before, during, or in the aftermath of the May 2024 Derecho or Hurricane Beryl?

Yes, both TDEM and CenterPoint.

b) Did any utility request the information? If yes, please list which utility(s) requested this information and the date the information was requested.

OEM. CP never requested, but COH provides.

LG 1-15 Were you involved in any discussions with any utility(s) or TDEM concerning prioritizing restoration of critical infrastructure or critical care facilities for purposes of determining how mobile generation facilities would be deployed in the aftermath of the May 2024 Derecho or Hurricane Beryl?

No. Up to this point, we have not had a follow up meeting with CenterPoint to discuss prioritization of critical infrastructure.

If yes:

a) Please identify which entities participated in these discussions.

b) Please describe the discussion(s) with each of the entities.

c) Please state whether, in your opinion, the identified entities followed the guidance or guidelines you provided concerning the deployment of mobile generation facilities in the aftermath of the May 2024 Derecho or Hurricane Beryl.

LG 1-16 Describe the level of communication between you and any utility(s) before, during, and in the aftermath of the May 2024 Derecho or Hurricane Beryl.

- CenterPoint was notified numerous times via email, phone calls, text messages, and in person meetings/discussions at the COH Office of Emergency Management.
- CP was present at COH OEM during both activations, and they received real-time information and requests.
- Derecho – 5/16 through 5/22
- Beryl – 7/7 through 7/16

LG 1-17 If known, please identify the percentage of homes and businesses in your area that have a smart electric meter connection.

Yes, every connection is a smart electric meter. Homes, businesses, and COH property.

LG 1-18 If known, please identify the percentage of homes and businesses in your area that have a smart water meter connection.

All direct COH water customers have a smart water meter connection.

LG 1-19 Please provide any additional information that may be helpful to this investigation.