



COVID₁₉ CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLAN

TRAVIS COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICE DISTRICT 9

March 2020

"It is in toughest times that we show our greatest strengths and rise to the occasion"

Introduction

The Westlake Fire Department, also known as Travis County Emergency Services District No. 9, was created to address the growing needs of the District in fire protection and primary emergency medical care. The Department protects a community of approximately 15,000 citizens and covers approximately 15 square miles and serves the cities of Rollingwood, West Lake Hills, and unincorporated areas of Rolling Hills West, Westwood, Camelot, Rob Roy, St. Stephens, Rivercrest and Riverhills. The Westlake Fire Department consists of over 30 career professionals. These professionals provide services in the following areas: structural fire suppression, wildland fire fighting, EMS fires response services, technical rescues and public service incidents. The Department operates two fire stations and a district office and responds to approximately 2,000 calls for service each year.

Mission

To Preserve Life and Property by providing Community Risk Reduction and Emergency Response that exceeds the expectations of our community.

Vision

Be recognized as an agency that sets the highest standard of safeguarding our community by providing high quality emergency services through public education, response and emergency prevention.

Core Values

Accountability – Take ownership and responsibility for individual and team actions and remain focused on the priorities of the Westlake Fire Department.

Integrity – Model honest and trustworthy behavior through an inclusive customer oriented service.

Professionalism – Obtain, maintain and enhance personal knowledge, skills and abilities to ensure delivery of the highest quality of service through pride, passion and dedication.

Safety – Continuous regard for the safety of self and others through commitment and compliance of Policies, Standard Operating Guidelines and Health and Wellness Initiatives so we can fulfill our Mission.

Innovation – Support continuous improvement by creating new ideas, advancing best practices and operating as a team.

Current Situation

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that is spreading from person to person in parts of the United States. The risk of infection with COVID-19 is higher for people who are close contacts of someone known to have COVID-19, for example healthcare workers, or household members. Other people at higher risk for infection are those who live in or have recently been in an area with an ongoing spread of COVID-19.

The virus spreads mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It also may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

Austin Public Health Response in Travis County:

Austin Public Health (APH) is closely monitoring the rapidly evolving situation in coordination with the Texas Department of State Health Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and local and regional public health and healthcare agencies. APH has developed a five-phase plan to coordinate COVID-19 response activities.

- Phase 1: Persons Under Monitoring
- Phase 2: Persons Under Investigation (Testing in Progress)
- Phase 3: Confirmed Case(s) (No Person-to-Person spread)
- Phase 4: Limited Person-to-Person Spread (Close/Household Contacts)
- **Phase 5: Sustained Person-to-Person Spread in the Community**

Community spread means people have been infected with the virus in an area, including some who are not sure how or where they became infected.

APH has activated the Department Operations Center to allow for enhanced response coordination, provided symptom monitoring for residents returning to Austin/Travis County from travel abroad, and provided prevention messaging to health care professionals, businesses, schools, and the general public. Additionally, the Austin-Travis County Emergency Operations Center (ATCEOC) has been activated. A Travis County Emergency Service District Chief Liaison is located at the ATCEOC and is assisting with coordinating the needs of all Travis County Fire Districts.

A “Stay at Home” Order was announced March 24, 2020 and went into effect on March 25, 2020 at the direction of County Judge Sarah Eckhardt and requires all non-essential community members to stay home in all of Travis County.

The City of Rollingwood Mayor Michael Dyson made a declaration of Public Health Emergency on March 18, 2020 and the City Council extended the order on March 25, 2020 for 30 days by ordinance.

Leadership

Travis County Emergency Service District No. 9 is governed by five Board of Commissioners who provide high level direction to the Fire Chief regarding District Finances, Strategic Planning and Community involvement. The Fire Chief is responsible for leading the Divisions of the Department and applying operating guidelines and policies to the employees of the District so they operate safely and provide the best service to support the Community in emergency and disaster response.

The Fire Chief is in communication with the Board of Commissioners and is providing briefings on the current pandemic, its possible effect on service delivery and future financial implications for the upcoming budget years, including property and sales tax.

Due to the current pandemic the Governor has made modifications to the Open Meetings Act that now allows the Board to conduct meetings and formal business by phone or video conference. The staff is prepared to support virtual meetings as needed.

Administration Division

The Fire Department operates a District Office in West Lake Hills with the Prevention Division, Operations District Chief, Training, Fire Chief and Administrative Support. Currently the support staff is working from home. The District Office is open for entry by essential Fire Personnel only and closed to the public. Currently there is no face to face contact with the public. Staff is still on site and able to answer questions by phone. All Department Command Staff, Officer, and Division Meetings have been moved to Zoom virtual meetings.

Operations Division – Fire Suppression, EMS, Rescue

The Operations Division operates out of two fire stations and 30 fire suppression personnel work a 48/96 hour shift rotation with 10 personnel on each shift 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Operations Division is operating at full force with no staff reductions. The Command Staff has developed a five level approach (see chart on page 4) to continue to provide emergency response to the Community while being faced with limiting factors to provide the service while keeping the health and well-being of the firefighters in mind. Paid Time Off and other leave may be cancelled to maintain staffing levels. The Department is currently operating at Level 1 – Normal Operations. During the disaster declaration by Travis County, the Fire Chief will make response level and staffing level decisions and notify the Board of Commissioners, City of Rollingwood leadership, City of West Lake Hills leadership and the Travis County Office of Emergency Management of response and staffing level changes.

Level	Trigger Point	Shift Commander	Station 901	Station 902
Level 1	Normal Operations	1 Battalion Chief 1 Field Incident Tech	1 Engine – 4 FF	1 Engine – 4 FF
Level 2	High Call Volume	1 Battalion Chief	1 Engine – 3 FF	1 Engine – 3 FF 1 Squad – 2 FF
Level 3	Low Personnel Availability	1 Battalion Chief	1 Squad – 2 FF	1 Engine – 4 FF
Level 4	Increased Sick Personnel	1 Battalion Chief	1 Squad – 2 FF	1 Engine – 3 FF
Level 5	Cannot Fulfill Mission	1 Battalion Chief	Assistance From Other Agencies	Assistance From Other Agencies

In further action to limit exposure and spread disease, fire companies may cancel at the direction of 911 Communication on priority 3, 4, or 5 medical incidents if, during triage, the caller is suspected to be a COVID 19 patient and does not meet immediate care criteria. Fire Companies will stage if the call screening criteria has not been completed and the unit arrives on scene until told to enter by 911 Communications. All personnel are following isolation techniques and medical directives issued by the Travis County Division of Clinical Practice and Education (DCPE) while providing patient care and decontamination procedures as directed after the incident.

All personnel have the COVID 19 public safety desk contact information available to discuss any hazards after a call, PPE questions, COVID 19 testing information. A public safety testing site is available and Department leadership will continue to explore testing options for personnel. A public safety quarantine option is also being discussed for those situations where quarantine may be necessary, but the firefighter cannot quarantine in place. Department leadership has secured three different options available for firefighters if this becomes a necessity.

To protect our workforce the fire stations have been closed to the public, family members and off duty personnel. Only on duty and essential personnel will be allowed in the fire stations. Essential personnel must follow the Travis County Order to enter a critical infrastructure facility. On duty personnel must complete temperature checks twice a shift.

Fire Prevention Division

The Fire Prevention Division continues to office at the District Office and provide essential service to the Community as needed. The Division is completing inspections that are needed for continuation of construction at building facilities, investigations, and critical code enforcement. No general maintenance inspections will be completed. When simple re-inspections can be completed these are done remotely by video conference over FaceTime or other video applications.

All scheduled fire station visits, birthday parties and public education events have been cancelled until further notice.

Training

The Training Division consists of a District Chief, an EMS Coordinator and an EMS Quality Control/ Quality Assurance reviewer. All in person training has been suspended until further notice. Our training team continues to attend virtual meetings and deliver best practices for EMS incidents according to direction from the Center for Disease Control, DCPE, Austin Public Health, the International Association of Fire Chiefs and the International Association of Firefighters.

Each Fire Company can continue to complete in station training with their crew with social distancing and best practices in mind, but multi-company training has been suspended and will resume at a later date.

Summary

The District has established policies and procedures that have been issued for the safety of the Community and the firefighters that operate daily at Travis County Emergency Service District No. 9. The Department stands ready to adjust with the changing times ahead and will continue to be in contact with our regional partners to provide the best service we can and fulfill our Mission, stand by our Vision and maintain our Core Values.