



# TCEQ SUPPORT IN AN EMERGENCY

## FIRST RESPONDERS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE

## TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ROLE

### INCIDENT OCCURS



Initial response to an emergency is made by local firefighters, law enforcement officers, emergency medical technicians, and other first responders. TCEQ is not a first responder but does fill a vital supportive role during an active event. Emergency response management and decisions (including for shelter-in-place and evacuation orders) are led by city mayors and county judges.



If a facility incident creates an imminent health threat, the facility owners/operators notify and cooperate with local emergency authorities. Either the facility or the local authorities are responsible for undertaking the appropriate measures to notify potentially affected people.



TCEQ is typically involved in responding to emergencies that originate from facility-specific incidents or natural disasters (such as floods, winter storms, hurricanes, tornados, etc.)



A facility may be required to notify TCEQ within 24 hours of a hazardous material release to air, water, or land.



Although TCEQ staff are not first responders, TCEQ maintains state-wide 24-hour response capabilities. When notified of an emergency response event (and when conditions are safe), TCEQ may deploy investigators to assess environmental conditions and to ensure that releases of hazardous materials are stopped or contained.



### RESPONSE



Local governments have primary control over response efforts. When needed, local governments can request support from the state, and state-level members can request federal support. Local, state, and federal representatives together can present a united response at command centers.



Other state agencies with primary spill-response jurisdiction include the Texas Division of Emergency Management, General Land Office, and the Railroad Commission.



TCEQ can provide 24-hour support and guidance to other agencies and local governments during an emergency response to natural disasters and industrial incidents and during any subsequent remedial activities.



TCEQ primarily ensures that facility owners/operators take appropriate action to identify, assess, monitor, and cleanup any unauthorized releases to the environment.



TCEQ will oversee abatement and removal actions necessary to protect public health and the environment, and can conduct monitoring of air and/or water quality. Such monitoring focuses on areas where the public may be impacted. TCEQ may retain an on-scene emergency-response contractor for these activities if necessary.



It may take several hours for TCEQ to reach a scene due to safety concerns, travel time, and equipment calibration.

### RECOVERY



Follow-up reports and investigations by agencies involved may be required.



After an emergency response event, TCEQ may oversee remediation and cleanup activities and ensure the responsible party completes cleanup in accordance with state law. These types of events could result in an enforcement action.



Following a natural disaster, TCEQ supports critical infrastructure systems like drinking and waste water, monitors the status of impacted facilities, and assists with debris management.



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