

Advance Emergency Preparedness Plan Ensures your Water District's Readiness for Natural Disasters

Many years ago, Fort Bend County Municipal Utility District No. 25 (the District) was like most other MUDs, i.e., most actions taken are a reaction to a new crisis and usually occur after the fact. Reactive behavior is expensive, causes disruptions in service, and is not timely. Change was necessary to reduce expensive “after the fact” behaviors that are often too late to avoid disaster. Hence, changes were implemented many years ago to ensure the District is/was ready before a natural disaster occurs. The District adopted a proactive approach in operational philosophies and behavior to improve fiscal results, improve customer service, and to ensure timely results. The changes included:

1. The development and implementation of a mission statement and short- and long- term strategic plans to include capital improvements and operations goals to support attainment of the District’s mission.
2. The construction of additional facilities to create redundancy in water and sewage treatment facilities to minimize the opportunity for system down time and to gain economies of scale.
3. Existing facilities that previously had no emergency generators and/or diesel fuel equipment on site were retrofitted, and new facilities were constructed, that include emergency generators powered by natural gas at every facility (water plants, wastewater treatment plant, and all lift stations) to eliminate the need for location and delivery of equipment and fuel supplies in an emergency. Hence, all pumps and motors are functional if electrical power is absent via auto-switchover to natural gas power, eliminating the need to wait for fuel deliveries or trying to secure generators from outside supply sources. Thus, when power lines went down during Hurricane Ike, the generators switched on immediately and there was never a loss of pressure in the system (and no storm surge infiltration), which is why there was no need to boil water in our District. District residents had access to continuous water and sewer service during the storm. Additionally, the District owns and operates its water wells; the City of Houston does not provide water to our District.
4. A proactive maintenance program facilitates a progressive, planned repair approach to reduce emergency breakdowns and repairs.
5. Restocking chemicals and other critical supplies well in advance of know emergencies to ensure enough supplies on hand to facilitate operations for two weeks.
6. Trucks are “topped off” with fuel in advance of impending events and the fleet is decentralized to minimize potential loss.
7. Essential staff remains on duty during the imminent arrival of a known catastrophic event to include the Incident Commander and licensed plant operators who move on site and remain on site until the danger or threat has passed. Staff, during catastrophic events, go to facilities or respond to resident concerns in groups of two.
8. District billing and accounting databases are exported to out-of-town locations to maximize safekeeping and the ability to recreate information should it become necessary to do so. Additionally, all computer files are printed and copied to external hard drives, important documents such as contracts and insurance files, and additional computer equipment, are sent to cold site storage facilities identified as outside the potential disaster area.
9. Battery operated communication equipment as well as emergency radio equipment is already on site.
10. Extra motors are on site for water plants to ensure that motors are replaced immediately in the event of water infiltration.
11. Operations was moved “in-house” to ensure the availability of personnel who dedicate 100% of their time when on duty to safeguarding and caring for the District’s residents and assets.

Should the public water supply become contaminated, notices will be posted on the bulletin board in front of the District’s administrative building and signs will be posted at the entrances of each subdivision within the District regarding the need to boil water.

Residents may contact the District at 281-277-0129 and follow voice prompts for emergency requests. However, if the phone system fails, contact the on-call operator directly at 281-850-8912. Please be advised that if cell towers are adversely impacted, direct contact may not be possible until tower service is restored.

While no organization, including the best-prepared municipalities, can guarantee continuous service during every regional disaster, such as a category 4 or 5 hurricane or an F5 tornado, the District's Emergency Response/Preparedness plan was designed to minimize the opportunity for loss of service to residents. The District's philosophy is founded on the belief that government entities, including municipalities, have only one thing to offer and that is service. Thus, the services provided must be at the highest levels reasonably attainable.

The results indicate that every change implemented by the District during the last 18 years resulted in the successful attainment of the defined objectives. Our residents may be assured that when a catastrophic event is identified that may adversely affect our District, emergency response plans were developed and implemented some time ago to minimize the opportunity for a loss of service and/or downtime.

* Please note, the above information pertains to residences located within Fort Bend County Municipal District # 25 only.