

TPCN News



INSIDETHISISSUE

TPCN Cyber Security Project	1
Girl Scout Patch	2
Cyber Security Cont.	2
Resolving Deer Park Fires	3



333 Guadalupe St.,
Suite 2-212,
Austin, Texas 78701

Telephone: 512.305.6911

Email: csecinfo@csec.texas.gov

Web: csec.texas.gov

 [facebook.com/TXCSEC](https://www.facebook.com/TXCSEC)

 twitter.com/CSEC911

**Would you like to see a topic in
the TPCN Poison newsletter?**

Email

**melinda.crockom@csec.texas.gov
and let us know!**

TPCN Cyber Security Project

The Commission on State Emergency Communications (CSEC) staff has been steadily working on a multi-year, multi-phased cyber security initiative that, when completed, will raise the Capability and Maturity of the Texas Poison Control Network (TPCN) to a Level 3. Currently, the TPCN is operating at a level one on the Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI) scale.

CMMI is known as a set of global best practices that drives business performance through building and benchmarking key capabilities. The CMMI has levels 1 through 5, with 5 being the most capable and efficiently run business.

“The goal is to get the TPCN to a three rating on the CMMI scale so that the network and all its data is better protected,” CSEC Poison Control Manager James Johnson said. “The vendor, Myers and Stauffer, will assist the TPCN in increasing efficient productivity and decreasing potential cyber security risks.”

The cyber security project first kicked off in 2017 when CSEC staff worked with Myers and Stauffer on a baseline assessment of security in each of the poison control centers. The information collected in this initial assessment created a roadmap to help achieve Level 3 Capability and Maturity rating for the TPCN.

“We are dedicated to making the TPCN a secure and safe network,” CSEC Chief Program Technical Officer Kevin Rohrer said.

“We are doing it in incremental steps, but we have been making great progress.”

Following up on the initial baseline and road map assessment, CSEC issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for remediation services to assist CSEC in implementing the findings in the roadmap. Myers and Stauffer were awarded the contract through a competitive bid process and the project kicked off in April 2019 and will run through 2023.

The vendor’s task will be to take the TPCN roadmap created and produced in 2017 and utilize that to track and help upgrade current security policies. The vendor will work with each center to enhance their security safety by putting policies and procedures in place.

“Right now, we are figuring out how much these security items will cost and what we can reasonably achieve in the next couple years,” Johnson said. “This is part of what Myers and Stauffer is assisting us with, so we better know how to remediate TPCN security.”

The first deliverable the vendor will provide for the TPCN cyber security project is an implementation plan covering tasks for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2019. This will consist of procedures, user guides and disaster recovery policies, to name a few. An evaluation of the TPCN will then be reviewed yearly and updated accordingly and as needed to meet all standards and policies. All these updates will ensure the network is better protected from hackers and cyber-attacks.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Creating a Girl Scout Poison Control Patch

The Texas Poison Center Network (TPCN) and Girl Scouts recently collaborated to create a Girl Scout patch about poison control. For over a year, educators met monthly and created content for Girl Scouts to produce such as creating a poster board about a poison or learning about the similarities of candies and medicine and sharing what they learned with their troop.

Each educator took on a different age group which included Daises, Brownies, Juniors, Cadettes, and Seniors/Ambassadors. Within each age group, the Girl Scouts needed to complete two of the four units. Each unit contained three tasks they had to complete. Once they completed all the tasks within two units, they would earn the Poison Control Patch.

“It is exciting that so many young girls will now have the opportunity to learn about poison prevention and will be encouraged to share their knowledge with others,” North Texas Poison Control Educator Cristina Thomas said.

Once the poison educators finished producing the criteria for the Girl Scouts to accomplish, the next task they tackled was creating the design of the poison control patch. TPCN educators worked with Girl Scouts of Central Texas to create a patch that reflected both Girl Scouts and poison control.

Once the Girl Scouts of Central Texas patch is ready for Girl Scouts to earn which is slated for the end of July, the poison educators will then work with the other Texas Girl Scout Councils to provide a poison control patch in their regions too. All Texas Girl Scouts will then have the opportunity to earn a patch and learn about the importance of poison control.

“Thousands of people are affected by poisons each year,” Thomas said. “This patch gives young girls the opportunity to learn about poisons, poison prevention, and prepare them for poison emergencies.”



Above is the final artwork for the Girl Scout of Central Texas Patch which will be available in Girl Scout shops for purchase starting in August.

TPCN Cyber Security Project Cont.

Why is Cyber Security important?

Cyber security is incredibly important to public safety and protecting the poison centers from cyber-attacks. In just the last year alone, there have been hundreds of cyber-attacks on different businesses and, specifically, over 50 attacks on public safety entities. These entities ended up paying lots of money toward ransoms to get control of their networks again. The amount of cyber-attacks happening daily is daunting. That’s why it is crucial that agencies take all the necessary steps to protect themselves from a cyber-attack. And that is why CSEC is working diligently with Myers and Stauffer to ensure that the TPCN is better protected from cyber-attacks.



How the TPCN Resolved Poison Control Issues in the Deer Park Fire

March 18th started out as a normal day in Deer Park, Texas but by that evening things had changed tremendously. The Intercontinental Terminal Company's (ITC) chemical storage tanks, for reasons still under investigation, caught fire. Because of this, chemicals such as Naphtha, Xylene, Toluene, and Benzene were released into the air.

The fires continued to burn from March 18th to March 20th, and while the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) ensured that the air quality levels of the chemicals released were not a threat, the Texas Poison Center Network (TPCN) still received calls from concerned citizens. Initially, the volume of calls received by the Poison Centers related to this event were low, but as the 1-800 number was released on social media in the early hours of March 21st, the numbers climbed rapidly. This increase in volume further illustrates the utility and continued need for public education.

Luckily no serious injuries were reported from the incident at ITC. The fire was contained, and a dike wall barrier system installed to contain further damage to the facility and reduce the probability of releasing additional dangerous chemicals.

Unfortunately, on March 22nd, the dike wall partially collapsed and released more chemicals, some into the Houston Ship Channel causing a temporary "best not to eat fish" advisory to be issued by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS). It was still not enough to pose a danger to citizens but did influence the prolonging of containment and clean-up efforts of



Above is a photo of the Deer Park chemical explosion that occurred in March. Photo credit: Houston Chronicle

"Once we became aware of the new conditions everyone worked together and created materials and talking points for the specialist and we all had good communication," Central Texas Poison Director David Baker said.

The Poison Centers worked with other state and federal agencies to create and disseminate unified messaging to citizens. During the emergency response, the leadership of each center collected data from calls, which included concerns about toxic fumes in the air, but more importantly provided the ability to catalog the event for later analysis.

For human exposure calls, common symptoms included headache, nausea, throat irritation, cough, dizziness, and/or vertigo, chest pain, and ocular irritation.

The TPCN received a total of 262 calls from March 17th to April 4th. Of the calls, 195 calls were considered human exposures and 67 were considered information calls.

"We were reminded of the importance of team work, working with multiple agencies to provide quick and accurate information to healthcare providers, the public and to first responders," Baker said. "It also showed the need for further preparedness training and potentially a staffing model that would allow for surge capacity when these events happen."

In the end, the TPCN handled the increased volume of calls well and were able to help many citizens with poison concerns.