

CAPCOG CONNECTIONS

A PUBLICATION OF THE CAPITAL AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS



Texas Review and Comment System (TRACS) Repealed

CAPCOG's long-standing service of providing the Texas Review and Comment System (TRACS) has been ended by the repeal of TRACS on Mar. 27, 2011. Christopher Burnett, Executive Director of the Governor's Office, Criminal Justice Division (CJD), announced that TRACS would no longer be an initiative carried out by the State of Texas.

TRACS, [§5.191 Texas Administrative Code (TAC)] was established May 1, 1984, as a statewide system that would provide state and local officials with opportunities to review and comment upon state plans, applications for federal or state financial assistance, and environmental impact statements related to projects or programs that affect their jurisdiction before the proposals are approved or funded.

As federal funding for development initiatives dried up, CJD determined that there was no need to continue the TRACS process. CJD's State's Grants Team, the original office charged with preparing comments on applications coming through the TRACS process, was collapsed in early March in preparation for the transition. In-line with the repeal of TRACS, CAPCOG will stop accepting applications for review and will dismantle the TRACS committee. We thank all individuals who served on the CAPCOG TRACS Advisory Committee over the years. Their dedication and commitment to the process will forever be appreciated.

If you have questions or require additional information on this article or the TRACS process, please contact Michelle Casanova, Community Services Program Manager, at 512-916-6163, or mcasanova@capcog.org.

CAPCOG Jurisdictions Excel in Communications Drill

"By 2010, 90% of all high-risk urban areas designated within the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) are able to demonstrate response-level emergency communications within one hour for routine events involving multiple jurisdictions and agencies."

-- National Emergency Communications Plan (NECP), Goal 1

One of the lessons learned during the response to the Sept. 11, 2001, attack on the World Trade Center is that effective communications among public safety agencies from multiple jurisdictions is critical to saving lives—citizens and first responders alike. In conjunction with federal funding for the development of inter-operable telecommunications systems, the federal Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), in the *National Communications Plan*, required local jurisdictions to demonstrate their ability to communicate with each other during major emergencies.

Recently the CAPCOG jurisdictions that comprise the Austin-Round Rock UASI joined with 400-500 personnel from the University of Texas at Austin and other public safety agencies to conduct an exercise that clearly demonstrated that they have met the goal. Taking advantage of the large number of agencies involved in providing

security and public safety support at Darrell K. Royal Texas Memorial Stadium for the UT vs. UCLA football game in late Sept., involving a



crowd of 101,437 inside the stadium and roughly 20,000 who participated in various tail-gating activities in areas adjacent to the stadium, UASI personnel successfully demonstrated for federal evaluators their ability to effectively plan to manage such a large scale event. Of

particular interest was a demonstration of the ability of the various public agencies and disciplines to communicate effectively.

In the after-action report on the exercise, the federal evaluators praised the "strong leadership and effective prevent planning process displayed at this event." The report states, "Throughout the period of observation, operational resources were used to successfully handle traffic flow, crowd control, disturbances, medical emergencies, and missing children without any significant (See *COMMUNICATIONS*, p. 4)

Initial Census 2010 Data Released

CAPCOG has compiled some of the recently released Census Data into tabular and GIS format on the agency's website, will be providing several reports analyzing new data, and will be conducting *State of the County* forums with three currently being planned: Hays, Caldwell, and Williamson.

Initial population data released by the U.S. Census Bureau show during the past decade that the region has experienced explosive population growth. With approximately 1.83 million residents, the CAPCOG Region has gained 483,000 residents since 2000, an increase of 36%.

All counties within the region experienced population increases. With 212,000 additional residents, Travis County posted the largest net increase in population. Still, the highest levels of growth occurred elsewhere in the CAPCOG Region. With a growth rate of 69%, Williamson County was the second fastest-growing county in the state. Hays County, where the population increased 61%, was the fourth fastest growing county in Texas during this period. At 6.1%, Lee County experienced the slowest rate of growth within the region. Still, Lee County grew faster than 145 other counties within Texas.

Overall, the official Census 2010 population counts were remarkably close to previously published estimates by the Bureau. In some individual jurisdictions, however, population figures were significantly lower than previous estimates. Given the important role that Census 2010 data will play in determining levels of federal assistance for years to come, some communities have begun to explore the possibility of challenging the population counts. Unfortunately, successfully challenging decennial Census data is extraordinarily difficult. According to the U.S. Census, challenges to the 2000 Census data "resulted in a net gain in population of about 2,700 people. This amounts to about 1/1000th of 1% of the nation's population of 281 million people counted in the 2000 Census."

Additional Census 2010 information is available covering demographic characteristics such as race/ethnic breakdown, race/ethnic breakdown of the population over 18, and housing unit and vacancy counts. This has also been compiled in tabular and GIS format and posted on our website. And stay tuned as more detailed Census information is released sometime this summer.

Regional Law Enforcement Academy (RLEA) Training Update

CAPCOG's RLEA is preparing to graduate two Basic Peace Officer Course classes in April, 2011, which will provide an additional 56 peace officers for our area law enforcement agencies. April will also see the beginning of BPOC Class 61 which is a day academy to be held at the RLEA.

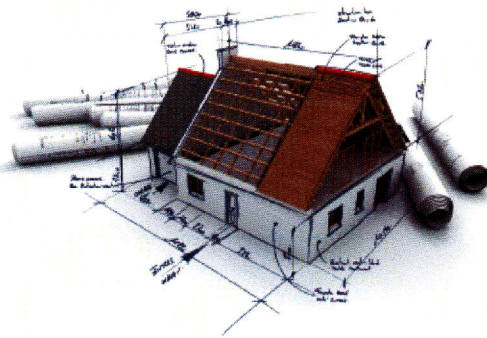
The RLEA has set its in-service training schedule for the second and third quarters of 2011 and will be offering several intermediate courses and specialized courses including Basic Instructor, Firearms Instructor, Advanced Human Trafficking, PPCT Defensive Tactics, and Investigative Interviewing. Classes to complete training requirements from TCLEOSE such as Legislative Updates are offered on an ongoing basis.

The "Use of Force" training simulator is currently in the Burnet County area and is scheduled to be going to Blanco, Hays, and Caldwell Counties in the coming weeks.

Agencies seeking other core courses are encouraged to contact Mike Jennings at mjennings@capcog.org. For a complete list of training to be provided, log on to our web site at www.capcog.org.

CAPCOG to Offer MyPermitNow Software to Member Cities and Counties

CAPCOG, in conjunction with The South Central Planning and Development Commission (SCPDC) in Louisiana, is now offering MyPermitNow to our cities and counties. MyPermitNow is a web-based permitting software that provides project tracking for construction projects and is customizable to a local government's needs with the capability of storing plans, photos, and relevant documents. Specifically, it allows online permit submission, processing, and automated notifications through the entire permitting process, starting with the submission of building documents through the issuance of a permit to the permitting of occupancy.



There is no initiation charge and the annual fee is low and based on the actual number of permits issued annually by your local government. Additionally, there is absolutely no charge

for technical support for licensees of MyPermitNow. As such, MyPermitNow should offer our region's local governments substantial savings over purchasing or independently developing software programs to track their permitting processes. CAPCOG held a demonstration and information session in March to demonstrate the program and features; follow-up demonstrations are being scheduled for individual cities interested in using the software.

The service also offers archiving of past documents and records to maintain continuity in your government's record keeping. As such, MyPermitNow is ideal for creating a "paperless" permitting process. This software can even be used to facilitate input from third-party inspectors, such as the inspectors with whom counties which have recently entered into inspection programs must interface. MyPermitNow also offers code enforcement and addressing software programs in which governments may also participate if they feel it will meet their needs. (See *PERMIT*, p. 4)

CAPCOG to Improve Air Quality Monitoring Capabilities

This year the region will have a new air quality monitoring station located at the main offices of the Hutto Independent School District. The new site will be outfitted with equipment to monitor levels of ozone, nitrogen oxides (NO_x), and sulfur dioxide (SO₂), and to monitor meteorological conditions. The new Hutto monitoring station is ideally located to detect elevated pollution levels transported into the area with a northeast wind flow and should assist the CAPCOG Air Quality staff, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in determining what impact the emissions from upwind sources may be having on local ozone levels.

An analysis was performed by the University of Texas Center for Energy and Environmental Research (UTCEER) to evaluate meteorological conditions associated with high ozone levels in the region. The study found that the frequency of occurrence of easterly and/or northeasterly winds was higher for the >= 70 ppb ozone range compared to the 60 – 64 ppb and 65 – 69 ppb ozone ranges, and such conditions usually occurred in the late Aug. through Oct. time period. The report for the study can be viewed at: http://www.capcog.org/documents/airquality/cac/2010/september2010/Austin_CM_ver21.pdf

CAPCOG Air Quality staff can use data from the new Hutto site to determine the impacts on the region of sources located to the north and east. If high ozone levels are accompanied by high levels of NO_x and SO₂ at the new Hutto monitoring station, this would indicate that upwind coal-fired power plant plumes were involved in contributing to the ozone levels. This data can then be compared to data from “downwind” monitoring sites, such as the one in Dripping Springs, to measure the impact of local emissions. In most cases the existing monitoring data indicate that the air entering the CAPCOG region already has fairly high ozone levels when local regulatory monitors are measuring high ozone. This monitoring station will provide additional insight into the role of ozone transport into the region.

In order to equip the new Hutto site, CAPCOG will be using the ozone and meteorological equipment from the existing Round Rock site, which will be shut down, and new equipment purchased with a grant from TCEQ to equip the new site. An evaluation of CAPCOG’s monitoring network by UTCEER showed that the Round Rock site was not well-positioned and ought to be moved. The NO_x and SO₂ monitoring equipment from the Lake Georgetown station will be moved into the new Hutto site.

CAPCOG will also be moving the SO₂ monitor at the Fayette monitor to the

McKinney Roughs monitoring station. UTCEER’s analysis showed that the McKinney Roughs site is very well positioned to serve as an upwind site for the area when the wind comes in from the east and southeast. Positioning the SO₂ monitor at McKinney Roughs should provide better data on the impacts of SO₂ sources such as coal-fueled power plants or cement kilns on regional ozone levels.

The new monitoring equipment will play an important role in any future State Implementation Plan to attain the ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The Austin area’s ozone “design value” is currently 74 parts per billion. The “design value” is a three-year average of the fourth highest 8-hour ozone concentrations and is what EPA uses to determine if an area is attaining the NAAQS or not. (See *AIR QUALITY*, p. 4)

CAPCOG 9-1-1 Telecommunicators Receive State Award

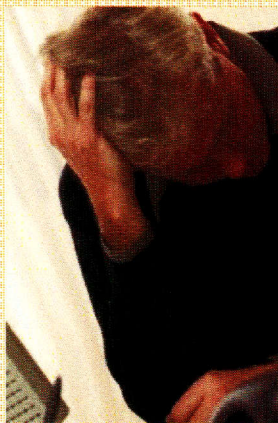
The second week of April is National Telecommunicator Week which is recognized by proclamations and resolutions at every level of government from the U. S. President down. The Commission on State Emergency Communications (CSEC), the Texas agency that oversees 9-1-1, annually honors the achievements and contributions of the men and women who are the backbone of Texas’ successful 9-1-1 program: 9-1-1 Telecommunicators.

The CSEC Silent Hero award is given to an individual public safety telecommunicator in recognition of his or her exceptional professionalism in the field of emergency communications. This award acknowledges the special contributions of telecommunicators whose daily performance of their duties is an inspiration and example to others in the field of public safety telecommunications.

This year’s Silent Hero awardees included: Stacy Baker from Cedar Park PD, Norma Belmares from Texas State University PD, Sandra Johnson from Austin PD, Shawne Marshall from Travis County SO, and Michelle Parker from Williamson County Emergency Communications.

Caregivers May Need Stress Relief Services

CAPCOG’s Area Agency on Aging, in collaboration with the WellMed Charitable Foundation, is implementing an evidence-based program entitled “Community Stress-Busting Program for Family Caregivers.” The program is directed toward Caregivers who provide basic care to another person with a chronic medical condition or long-term illness such as cancer, stroke, dementia, Parkinson’s disease, or Alzheimer’s disease. Being a caregiver may be stressful since those being cared for can become increasingly ill, unable to follow simple plans, develop behavioral problems, and become unable to recognize the caregiver.



The program provides for professional facilitators to teach stress management techniques that include relaxation and coping strategies which can be used on a daily basis during a nine-week program. The Stress-Busting Program is one of several services and supports available to caregivers through the Area Agency on Aging.

The Caregiver Support Program offers assessment and care planning to the families. Examples of supportive services may include arranging a family meeting for education purposes, arranging respite care, or even providing short-term individual counseling sessions for the caregiver. (See *CAREGIVER*, p. 4)

COMMUNICATIONS (*cont'd from p. 1*) communications impediments.” Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel “treated 32 patients and transported four patients to medical facilities by ambulance. Law enforcement reported a total of three arrests during the game.”

The evaluators concluded, “Therefore, OEC determined that the Austin Urban Area successfully demonstrated response-level emergency communications as outlined by NECP Goal 1 at an advanced level.”

Other CAPCOG jurisdictions are required to demonstrate their capabilities in response to NECP Goal 2. In June, 2011, personnel from all 10 counties will demonstrate that even though they operate on three distinctly different communications systems, they are able to communicate effectively with each other to respond to critical needs. Details of the scenario are being finalized, but it is expected that participants will represent EMS units and other public safety personnel.

PERMIT (*cont'd from p. 2*) CAPCOG is able to offer this through a special arrangement with SCPDC in Louisiana. SCPDC developed this tool in response to the higher levels of plan review and permit tracking that became mandatory in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Thanks to an agreement with SCPDC, CAPCOG is the first council of governments in Texas to offer MyPermitNow and has exclusive vendor rights in the Capital Area.

Please contact David Fowler, CAPCOG Regional Senior Planner, at (512) 916-6165 or dfowler@capcog.org for more information about MyPermitNow.

AIR QUALITY (*cont'd from p. 3*) While the Austin area’s design value meets current EPA standards, EPA has proposed to strengthen the standards to a range of 60-70 parts per billion due to scientific studies that have indicated health impacts at levels lower than the current standards. While the ozone standards have been delayed several times, EPA has announced that it now plans to finalize the standards by July 29, 2011.

Monitoring data is critical to use for the calibration of accurate air quality modeling efforts, which may be needed if the area is designated nonattainment for the new ozone standards.

CAPCOG is also working with UT-CEER to conduct “mobile” monitoring early in the late spring. This project will help the Air Quality Program staff better understand the pollution levels occurring in unmonitored areas of the region.

CAREGIVER (*cont'd from p. 3*) Additionally, the Capital Area Caregiver Teleconnection (CACT), an interactive support group conference call, is available on a schedule-basis. These calls are opportunities to ask questions of experts on topics of interest to caregivers.

If you would like to be placed on the Stress-Busting Program group interest list or have a question about any of the programs and services available to caregivers, please call Jill Findlay @ 512/916-6060.

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