

# Mobile Medical Units

## SB 982

State of Texas

November 2020

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## Executive Summary

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Due to the unprecedented and catastrophic nature of Hurricane Harvey, an increase of volunteers wanting to help in the recovery process and the sheer number of volunteers created volunteer management issues. While citizen volunteers are an essential component to emergency management and the disaster recovery process, the absence of a comprehensive process for identifying and deploying a state managed medical volunteer force can cause myriad issues compounding the effects of a major disaster.

During the 86<sup>th</sup> Legislature Senate Bill 982 was enrolled that added Sec 418.055 to the Texas Government code. This section called upon the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) to coordinate with the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to increase awareness and encourage the use of the Medical Reserve Corps by local governments.

The Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) is a national network of volunteers, organized locally to improve the health and safety of their communities. The MRC network comprises approximately 175,000 volunteers in roughly 850 community-based units located throughout the United States and its territories.

MRC volunteers include medical and public health professionals, as well as other community members without healthcare backgrounds. MRC units engage these volunteers as well as local and state-level partners to strengthen public health, improve emergency response capabilities, and build community resiliency. MRC units prepare for and respond to natural disasters, such as wildfires, hurricanes, tornados, blizzards, and floods, as well as other emergencies affecting public health, such as disease outbreaks.

TDEM and DSHS, through internal assessments, found that guidance was available through the State Volunteer System and Medical Reserve Corps Coordinator under DSHS but not listed in many training materials and courses offered by the division. In order to remedy this, TDEM with the subject matter experts provided by the coordinator, determined that incorporating current guidance into the local and regional planning process, creating supplemental training materials, and creating an awareness campaign through the use of social media and video produced by the TDEM Media and Communications group is the best plan to provide awareness of these capabilities.

TDEM plans to incorporate these recommendations into the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) Program. The EMPG Program plays an important role in the implementation of the National Preparedness System by supporting the building, sustainment and delivery of core capabilities essential to achieving the National Preparedness Goal of a secure and resilient nation. The incorporation of MRC related materials into the EMPG Program will increase the likelihood of local and regional jurisdictions awareness and understanding of the role of MRCs in their jurisdictions.

## Overview

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### Goal

The education and training of the role of the Medical Reserve Corps in times of disaster.

### Objectives

- Identification of training and education materials for local jurisdictions.
- Develop training and education materials to supplement existing materials.
- Implementation of materials into existing trainings tied to Emergency Management Performance Grant and creation of workshops for future conference presentations.
- Implementation of guidance to existing trainings and workshops for local jurisdictions.

### Audience

- TDEM Leadership
- TDEM Preparedness
- TDEM Field Staff
- Local Jurisdictions.

# Authority

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Include authority for project (legislation or pieces of legislation or other authorities)

Authors: [Senator Lois Kolkhorst](#) (District 18)

Coauthor: [Senator Eddie Lucio](#) (District 27)

Sponsor: Former Representative John Zerwas (District 28)

## **For more information:**

Texas Legislature Online

<https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=86R&Bill=SB982>

# Stakeholders

Members are identified in the chart below.

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Agency	Summary
<a href="#">Texas Division of Emergency Management</a> (TDEM)	The Texas Division of Emergency Management is charged with carrying out a comprehensive all-hazard emergency management program for the state and for assisting cities, counties, and state agencies in planning and implementing their emergency management programs.
<a href="#">Department of State Health Services</a> (DSHS)	The Texas Department of State Health Services job is to promote and protect the health of people, and the communities where they live, learn, work, worship, and play.

# Background, Discussion and Recommendations

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## Background

Pursuant to Senate Bill 982.055, the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) in coordination with Department of State Health Services State Volunteer System and Medical Reserve Corps Coordinator have developed an awareness campaign which would target the areas of the state that have little to no experience coordinating with Volunteer Networks and Volunteer Mobile Medical Units provided by the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC). The awareness campaign contains elements of already created plans, programs and training for local jurisdictions and emergency management partners as well creates new ways in distribution of said plans, programs and training.

## Discussion

In the State of Texas, the Emergency System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals (ESAR-VHP) is known as TDVR. TDVR is a federal program created to support states and territories in establishing standardized volunteer registration programs for disasters and public health and medical emergencies. The program, administered on the state level, verifies health professionals' identification and credentials so that they can respond more quickly when disaster strikes. By registering through TDVR, volunteers' identities, licenses, credentials, accreditations, and hospital privileges are all verified in advance, saving valuable time in emergency situations.

Texas Department of State Health Services maintains the state's Disaster Volunteer Registry (TDVR). When an individual registers with the TDVR, they must select a local, county-level organization that is affiliated with the TDVR. Deployment and coordination happen locally, usually by the local MRC, however, not all counties have an MRC.

MRC volunteers include medical and public health professionals, as well as other community members without healthcare backgrounds. MRC units engage these volunteers as well as local and state-level partners to strengthen public health, improve emergency response capabilities, and build community resiliency. MRC units prepare for and respond to natural disasters, such as wildfires, hurricanes, tornados, blizzards, and floods, as well as other emergencies affecting public health, such as disease outbreaks

TDEM as the states emergency management lead and primary source of training, planning and coordination for the state of Texas is able to provide additional resources to the current system housed under DSHS in the education and awareness of state volunteer system and use medical mobile units. With the addition of local jurisdictions receiving grant funding through TDEM the agency is able to incorporate the campaign in materials, training and exercises mandated under grant requirements.

## Recommendations

TDEM and DSHS have identified the following points as currently existing resources for local jurisdictions:

- DSHS has a dedicated position to work specifically with local jurisdictions through the State Volunteer System Coordinator/State MRC Coordinator.
- DSHS currently maintains the Texas Disaster Volunteer Register (TVDR) at [TexasDisasterVolunteerRegistry.org](https://TexasDisasterVolunteerRegistry.org) in which licensed healthcare professionals and

lay persons can register as volunteers to support the state's public health and medical preparedness response.

- The system allows DSHS to maintain a secure database with readily available, verifiable information about each volunteer's identity, qualifications, training, and experience which can be matched to locally organized volunteer needs.
- The system also directs out-of-state medical volunteers to the Texas Medical Board website where they can get information on Disaster Licensing for Out-of-State Providers.
- Volunteer information is passed on to local emergency management for coordination during times of disaster.
- Currently there are 16 MRC units in Texas available to assist communities.

TDEM and DSHS have identified creating the following in support of TDEM/DSHS awareness campaign for jurisdictions in fulfillment of 982.055:

- Update of the Local and Regional Plans templates to include verbiage pertaining to MRCs. Per Chapter 418 of the Texas Government Code jurisdictions need and update their plans to TDEM.
- TDEM Media and Communications Unit is in development of a suite of public facing informational videos to be used for awareness, recruitment, and just in time training.
  - Videos can be utilized for in-person or virtual workshops, accessed through TDEM's website, sent through social media posts, or included as part of TDEM/DSHS training programs.
- Select TDEM Training courses, offered through PreparingTexas.org, will have supplemental material added to course curriculums.
- Additional workshops and roadshows concerning MRC's will be scheduled once scheduling begins for 2021. These will include virtual workshops until in-person meetings resume.



## **For More Information**

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