



# TEXSAR DISPATCH

Each issue of the DISPATCH is dedicated to sharing the mission and passion of TEXSAR, and insights into its people.

**September 2024**

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TEXSAR's Community Support volunteers step up during Hurricane Beryl for the citizens of Wharton. ....page 9



## From the CEO



One thing that I hear very often when I meet with donors and people curious about TEXSAR is “You must have a lot of great stories.” They are right. Everyone involved in search/rescue/recovery/service type of activities has stories to tell, many of which they cannot share because their service may have something to do with a criminal case of a missing person, or simply out of respect for the privacy of people who need assistance or of the law enforcement personnel who requested support.

We do have stories, and we are proud to introduce this new publication, the **TEXSAR Dispatch**, as a way of sharing them. We chose the name “Dispatch” because it harkens back to a time of urgent and pertinent information shared via publication; it also describes our work as we are dispatched to any county in Texas where our services are requested.

We hope to inform, engage and entertain our readers with a variety of information and insights from the search-and-rescue (SAR) world. We will highlight our members and missions, celebrate our partners and sponsors, share knowledge and techniques, and provide a little fun in the mix. We hope you’ll learn about TEXSAR and the people who comprise “Texans helping Texans.”

TEXSAR folks work hard and party well. In just a few weeks, we will hold our 9<sup>th</sup> Annual TEXSAR Search Party. (Details and ticket information can be found [here](#).) Every event is fun, but this one will be particularly so as it helps us celebrate TEXSAR’s 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Our guest speaker, former Navy SEAL [Mike Sarraile](#), is sure to inspire, motivate and entertain with his stories. I hope to see you there. Please make note of the sponsors listed on the information page and support them with your business. TEXSAR never charges for its services; it is through the financial support of many that we are able to do what we do.

Thank you for your interest and support. I hope you will enjoy this new view of what makes TEXSAR, TEXSAR.

-Justin McInnis

# News and Announcements

**This post on LinkedIn caught our attention. Thank you, Mindy!**

Mindy Montford, Senior Counsel, Cold Case and Missing Persons Unit with the Office of the Attorney General, posted in LinkedIn, “The Texas AG Cold Case and Missing Persons Unit participated in a search with TEXSAR yesterday trying to locate a missing person. I was blown away by the capabilities of this amazing organization and the dedication of their team of volunteers. If your law enforcement or emergency management agency does not know about TEXSAR, you need to learn about how they can assist your search and rescue efforts. **And if you are a corporation, a community leader, or an individual with access to funding that can support these efforts, please consider helping them with their mission** (emphasis added). After watching them in action yesterday, it is essential that we ensure TEXSAR continues to assist in these critical situations.”

**Disaster Preparedness and Response Resource launched.** Check this [announcement](#) from Texas Mutual Insurance about the launch of BeforeDuringAfter, the state’s first and only consolidated disaster preparedness and resiliency website for small businesses. TEXSAR, Texas Mutual Insurance and Texas State University Institute for Government Innovation joined together to make this important resource a reality.

**TEXSAR Releases Free Drone Image Analysis Tool.** A new version of TEXSAR’s open-source tool, ADIAT, is now available. Check this [story](#) for full details.

## Member Milestones

There are many milestones that our members achieve in their time with TEXSAR. We honor and celebrate all that they do, including training and participating in team meetings, all of which is to help them be prepared for when the call comes to deploy. Our members currently hold 2,597 certifications in a variety of critical skills such as mantracking, lost person behavior, medical training, swiftwater rescue and many more.

All of the training is for one purpose: to be ready for whatever mission arises. Many of our members have hit significant milestones for the number of missions they have participated in. We celebrate their commitment and service above self as “Texans helping Texans.”

AS OF JULY 31, 2024

### TEXSAR MISSION MILESTONES

**250 + MISSIONS**

JOE H.

**100 + MISSIONS**

AMY S.

**10+ MISSIONS**

*Joined during or after 2022*

JEFF L.  
AJAY N.  
HANNAH T.  
ABE S.

**75 + MISSIONS**

DIANE M.  
RUSSELL W.

**50 + MISSIONS**

AUGIE G.  
CRAIG K.  
HANS H.  
KENNETH L.  
MEG H.

**25 + MISSIONS**

PHILIP H.  
BECKY P.  
CHRIS H.  
DANIEL T.  
GABE L.  
STEPHANIE S.

# Division Updates

TEXSAR is capable of responding anywhere in Texas. This capability is managed through four divisions that cover all 254 counties of the state. While missions are the most visible activity to the public, there is much more that happens in the divisions that provide training, enhance camaraderie and share information about TEXSAR to the community through various events and activities.

Some missions are scheduled with requesting agencies, and for other deployments the call-outs are unscheduled and urgent. Team members in all divisions commit much time and energy to ongoing training for when the call comes, whether for a scheduled deployment or an urgent need. While operations are spread over the four divisions to cover the state, volunteers from all divisions travel to wherever the mission may occur.

Of course, volunteers from all the divisions will be at the [9th Annual TEXSAR Search Party](#) in celebration of TEXSAR's 20th anniversary! Join us and meet the members! Apply to become a member [here](#).

Due to the confidentiality involved with many missions, only a sampling can be mentioned publicly. Here are a few highlights of TEXSAR's recent activities by division.

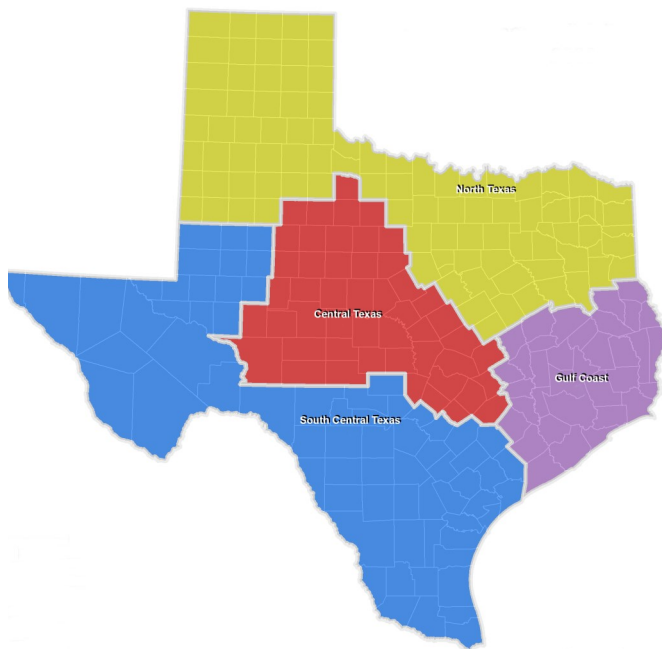
## Central

At their August monthly meeting, members participated in training held at Camp Mabry. Attendees experienced a knot-tying refresher as well as practiced successful immobilization of a patient to a backboard and Stokes basket. Training was available later in the month for Stop the Bleed™ and CPR.



## Gulf Coast

Hurricane Beryl provided several opportunities for volunteers to serve. More information can be found in the "Mission Matters" section of this newsletter.



*TEXSAR volunteers, boat in tow, head through rising waters to be of assistance during Hurricane Beryl.*

Division Lead, Jeff Conrad, was recently hired for a new staff position at TEXSAR: Director of Field Operations. Jeff began his new role on August 19. Jeff has been an active TEXSAR member since 2018 and held the division lead position for the Gulf Coast division since 2022. We welcome Jeff's experience, expertise and commitment to this new role.



*A new, outfitted trailer for Community Support was provided thanks to a generous grant from Mary Moody Northen Endowment. Thank you!*





*Community Support members provided assistance at Hedes House in Wharton.*

## North Texas

The Panhandle wildfires presented great opportunities and challenges for team members. TEXSAR volunteers took a key role in acquiring more than 1000 bales of hay and miles of fencing materials to provide relief to the ranchers in the area. Interesting note: 85% of the state's cattle are in the Panhandle area. See more information in the "Mission Matters" section of this newsletter.



*One of the key roles that volunteers played during the Panhandle wildfires was acquiring and distributing hay for cattle.*



*Volunteers join in a briefing during the wildfire mission.*

## South Central

The South Central division is anxious to welcome you aboard. Its area includes, generally speaking: Greater San Antonio, Corpus Christi, the Valley, San Angelo, and El Paso. If you live in this area and are interested in becoming part of the TEXSAR team, please go [here](#) and begin the application process. If you have questions, email [info@TEXSAR.org](mailto:info@TEXSAR.org).

## TEXSAR Trivia

The color of this box kind of catches your eye, doesn't it? That's the point.

TEXSAR volunteers proudly don their blaze orange gear. It is hard to miss them. That wasn't always the case.

In the early days of TEXSAR, their uniforms were tan colored. All was well with that until their famous mission in Big Bend, coming to the aid of journalist Cathy Frye. Rescuers found her in the nick of time — published reports stated that she had just four hours to live after two days lost in the mountains — and in the process they discovered that the existing uniforms are very hard for helicopter personnel to locate in the wilds. The change to blaze orange was made shortly thereafter.

# Spotlight on Supporters

What do you know about a turtle sitting atop a fence post? He didn't get there by himself.

How did TEXSAR earn the Governor's Volunteer Award for Excellence in Disaster Volunteerism? How was TEXSAR able to conceptualize, create and launch a resource for small businesses to deal with disasters? We didn't do all that by ourselves. Nothing that TEXSAR accomplishes is done alone.

Our supporters make it happen. For TEXSAR, supporters are the various agencies and organizations with whom we partner at their request on missions of various types, and the individuals, companies and foundations that provide the resources for us to deploy. We are humbled and appreciative of our supporters of all types.

The list of supporters continues to grow. This list of requesting agencies from 2023 reveals the breadth and depth of those who have the confidence and trust in TEXSAR to call on us in times of need.

## AGENCY PARTNERS

**THANK YOU TO THE AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS WHO WORK CLOSELY WITH TEXSAR;  
IT IS OUR MISSION TO SERVE OUR COMMUNITIES AND YOU ENABLE US TO DO THAT.**

Anderson County Sheriff's Office  
Aransas Pass Sheriff's Department  
Attorney General's Office  
Austin Police Department  
Big Bend National Park Police  
Buda Police Department  
Buffalo Bayou Partnership / HFD  
Caldwell County Sheriff's Office  
Cass County Sheriff's Office  
Comal County Sheriff's Office  
Denton Police Department  
Eustace County Sheriff's Office  
Everman Fire Department  
Everman Police Department  
Galveston County ESD #2  
Galveston Police Department  
Georgetown Police Department  
Grand Saline Police Department  
Greens Bayou Collation / HFD  
Guadalupe County Sheriff's Office  
Hays County Justice of the Peace  
Hays County Sheriff's Office  
H-E-B  
Hudson Fire & Rescue  
Kaufman County Sheriff's Office

Liberty County Sheriff Office  
Llano County Sheriff's Office  
Luling Police Department  
Missouri City Police Department  
Montgomery County Search and Rescue  
National Park Service  
Parker County ESD #6  
Plano OEM  
Port of Corpus Christi OEM  
Reeves County Sheriff's Office  
Rockwell OEM  
Round Rock Police Department  
Runnels County Sheriff's Office  
San Marcos Police Department  
Starr County Sheriff's Office  
Texas Division of Emergency Management  
Texas City Emergency Management  
Texas Rangers  
Tom Green County Sheriff's Office  
Travis County Fire Marshal  
Travis County Sheriff's Office  
US Coast Guard  
Weatherford ESD#6  
Williamson County Sheriff's Office





## Development Corner

**“What can I do to help? What do you need?”** Those are common questions from people after they hear about TEXSAR’s work. Those are important questions when it comes to helping an organization whose members are willing to go to the vastly separated four corners of the state to help total strangers in times of need.

My response to those questions are similar: “How can I help you fulfill your philanthropic goals? What do you or your business need to achieve with your generosity?” Not to turn the conversation into a game of 20 questions, but we recognize that there is a lot of pressure on generous people. We want to **work with you to help you get from your giving what it is that you want**. Whether it is a one-time gift, or monthly giving, or sponsoring a program, or naming an endowment or leaving a bequest...we can align your objectives and dreams with our needs and recognition programs. Let’s talk.

You might have questions. Feel free to call me at 512-956-6727 or email me at [Dion.McInnis@TEXSAR.org](mailto:Dion.McInnis@TEXSAR.org). I already look forward to our conversation.

One thing you can do that would make a tremendous difference is to support our [Training Fund](#). Our members currently hold almost 2,600 certifications, representing thousands of hours of training in specialized skills. They also represent a lot of money, largely borne by the members. They stay on top of their game for you, your loved ones and your neighbors. Please help us defray the cost of training for our members. As one member said after attending a training program underwritten by a grant,

*“I just wanted to reach out and say thank you for setting up this opportunity for me and the group to get SRT (Swiftwater & Flood Rescue Technician) knocked out with a great group of instructors.*

*It was an awesome experience and I greatly appreciate the work and efforts put in to make it all happen. It seems we all had a good time and enjoyed the area and water.”*



Training involves both classroom and in-the-field experiences. Commitment to ongoing training is key to TEXSAR’s ability to serve whenever and wherever we are called upon.



## Partner Perspective



*Michael Lenahan is the Leader of Group Engagement for Thrivent's South Central Advisor Group. Thrivent is a comprehensive financial services company with over 120 years of history as a fraternal benefit society. They provide financial advice, investments, insurance, banking, and generosity programs & solutions. His perspectives are revealing regarding Thrivent, TEXSAR and our shared purpose.*

Thrivent believes humanity thrives when people make the most of all they've been given. Our organization helps people achieve financial clarity, enabling lives of meaning and gratitude. Generosity is central to our mission, but the spirit of giving we promote is not limited to money. Our goal is to empower others to give in multiple ways; their resources, time, talents while embracing care for others. As a fraternal benefit society, Thrivent partners with non-profit organizations through the lens of five defining purposes: charitable, patriotic, religious, financial education, and strengthening the relationship we have with our members. TEXSAR certainly touches on several of those elements and we share kindred spirits.

Our partnership with TEXSAR started with breakfast, a conversation, and plenty of good humor with President/CEO, Justin McInnis, and Andrew Tull, Chairman of the Board. As I learned about TEXSAR, and the impact it makes for Texans all over the state, I knew this was the kind of organization we wanted to support. One of the primary reasons I joined Thrivent is because of the mission to serve others. It captured my attention because of the uniqueness and character in the hearts and souls of its people, which includes both our members and our employees. The same can be said of TEXSAR. I felt that as two, similar-minded organizations, Thrivent and TEXSAR could do great things together. As is our process, we vetted TEXSAR thoroughly. It was not long after we had that conversation that an opportunity arose to take action, and our relationship was forged.



University of Texas fan / TEXSAR board chair Andrew Tull (L) and Michael Lenahan enjoy a spirited moment.

In March, the wildfires in the Panhandle led to a requisition for TEXSAR to provide assistance with various logistics of getting hay to cattle and fencing to ranchers. Neither hay nor fencing is cheap. Thrivent was able to activate our disaster response program and bring attention to our members about TEXSAR's work and needs. Our members and other donors contributed more than \$100,000 to TEXSAR's efforts and Thrivent was able to match one dollar for every two dollars donated. It was an outstanding success. We're proud of that, but even more proud of the people who made it happen – Thrivent members, TEXSAR members and all of the donors.

TEXSAR volunteer members serve other Texans across the entire state. When disaster strikes, TEXSAR volunteers are right behind the first responders. Their effort is a tremendous asset to the state of Texas, a tribute to human nature, and an example of the impact we can make when we work together. As a membership organization of Christians, our purpose is clearly defined. I am reminded of Matthew 10:8, "Without cost you have received, without cost you are to give." I see that spirit in the sacrifices of TEXSAR members as they provide service above self as "Texans helping Texans" with their talent, courage and empathy. I appreciate how TEXSAR, in all of their work, never seeks the limelight or glory. They are truly humble servants and are happy to shine the light on others. I think it is also important to note that TEXSAR never charges for its services.

We are grateful they are shining the light on Thrivent by letting me share my thoughts with the extended TEXSAR family. The Thrivent family genuinely looks forward to the future and ongoing partnership with TEXSAR.



# Mission Matters

## Panhandle Wildfires

In 2024, TEXSAR officially launched its Community Support branch. The team faced an early test in March when the call came from Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) that they needed help. TEXSAR responded, showing up with very little clarity of the task at hand due to the dynamic conditions of the state’s largest -ever wildfire.

TEXSAR assisted TDEM, Texas VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters), and Texas AgriLife. Thanks to the leadership from North Texas Division Lead Meg Hinkley and all those who deployed, TEXSAR provided hope to a community by assisting with donation acquisitions and distribution, and volunteer management. More than 1000 bales of hay and miles of fencing materials were procured and distributed. “There were times when the most important thing that our volunteers provided was the time to listen to the stories of those affected,” Meg said.




## Chambers County Search

Many searches conclude with bad outcomes and a positive effect. A recent search in Chambers county was a good example: the victim’s body was found, but that provided closure for the family, which shared its appreciation, as did the Sheriff’s Office:

“The Sheriff’s Office is also expressing their gratitude to TEXSAR for their professionalism, dedication to service, and the donation of their time, resources, and expertise in helping us find Elizabeth and bring answers to her family.”

- Chambers County Sheriff’s Office



**Hesed House**  
16h · 🌐

We were in the thick of things this weekend and it is easy to forget to snap a few pictures every now and then, but these pictures represent a lot of hardwork and coordination. We have Tim, a volunteer heavy equipment operator all the way from Wimberly, connected to us by his Uncle, Mike Groover. We have one amazing @texsar community support team who worked hard to get to community members all over the county with information and lots of deeply appreciated water and snacks. TDEM has gifted us a rockstar incident support task force specialist named Belinda Alvarez who comes to us all the way from Hidalgo County to help us get recovery rolling (Note: we aren't letting her go home). There is Hesed House staff and volunteers who worked diligently to verify unmet needs and check on medically vulnerable community members all over the county. There are lists and maps and work tickets, and so many sticky notes and computers and phones. There is also deep appreciation for people who show up from other places to love our people. And so many of our people who have had no power for a week have done what they do best, welcomed them into their lives and tried to offer a little something back, sometimes even their own water. If you see someone around the county that isn't from here but came to help, thank them. You might not need them but they are here because someone else does. Count your blessings and pay some good forward. The world could use it.

## ... Hurricane Season Began with Beryl

Hurricane Beryl made sure folks in Texas were aware that it was hurricane season. For being only a Category 1 storm, it wreaked a variety of havoc. The cities of Wharton and Houston requested TEXSAR assistance and the Community Support volunteers responded. Their assistance was much appreciated. TEXSAR response included the “maiden voyage” of a new trailer for Community Support. Thanks to the generosity of the Mary Moody Northen Endowment, the team has a great asset that helps on missions and boldly promotes TEXSAR.



## Gallery of the Month



**Top left:** New friend, Adrian B., vice president of Schneider Trucking, invited TEXSAR members in North Texas to the company's new building open house.

**Below top left:** Gulf Coast Division members running new shallow-water boats and practicing navigation in the bays.

**Above bottom left:** Members prepare before Hurricane Beryl landfall.

**Bottom left:** Community Support members help at Hased House in Wharton after Hurricane Beryl.

**Top right:** Gulf Coast Division members learn about ropes, knots, mechanical advantages and Z-drags for application in the field.

**Bottom right:** TEXSAR members proudly shared the TEXSAR story at Career and Technology Association of Texas.







Thanks to a grant, TEXSAR was able to fully cover the cost of sending 10 volunteers to a swiftwater training session in Arkansas, offered by one of the premier training organizations in the country. At TEXSAR, we want to be sure that when you, your loved one or your neighbor need assistance, you can be assured that our volunteers are professionally trained, certified and ready to serve. It is all part of our commitment to provide service above self as “Texans helping Texans.”

For the most part, our members cover the costs of their training. Please consider helping TEXSAR defray more of the costs of training for our volunteers. You can donate [here](#).

# Important Links: Stay in Touch!

[Become a Member](#)

[Donate today!](#)

[Service Above Self Monthly Donor program](#)

[2023 Annual Report](#)

Social Media: [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [X](#), [YouTube](#)

**[www.TEXSAR.org](http://www.TEXSAR.org)**

## 9TH ANNUAL TEXSAR SEARCH PARTY

Tables and tickets are on sale until sold out.

Visit our website for more info:  
[www.texasar.org/searchparty](http://www.texasar.org/searchparty)

### Thank you, Sponsors!

**Presenting:** JAS

**Platinum:** H-E-B & Andrew Tull Enterprises

**Bar Sponsor:** Lande and Chris Juban

**Photo Booth Sponsor:** Hat Trick Promotions

**Gold:** GCS Technologies & Tailwind Business Ventures

**Silver:** Sun Coast Resources, Chris Branham Memorial Foundation, & The Hon. Judge Smith

YOU'RE INVITED TO THE

*9th Annual Search Party*

**09.21.24**

THE RÉNAISSANCE HOTEL - AUSTIN, TX

FEATURING SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER

*Mike Sarraille*

[www.texasar.org/searchparty](http://www.texasar.org/searchparty)

