

TEXSAR

DISPATCH



It is because of strong relationships with agencies and organizations that TEXSAR volunteers can be found most anywhere, including at the highest point in Texas thanks to our partnership with the National Park Service.

TEXSAR DISPATCH is dedicated to sharing the mission and passion of TEXSAR, as well as insight into its people.

May 2026
In this month's issue

- 2...From the CEO:** Partnerships are a two-way street
- 3...News and Announcements:** Highlights and good news
- 4...Development Corner:** Ensure our readiness by joining SAS
- 4...MPU Update:** "Trained to Respond. Committed to Bring Them Home."
- 5...Highlights from 2025:** Did you catch these highlights from our annual report?
- 5...Safety in an unpredictable world:** Going outdoors? Beware of ticks!
- 8-9...Gallery**
- Back Cover...Key Links:** Follow us and stay engaged

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From the CEO



Not a day goes by that all of us who comprise the TEXSAR family are not reminded of the importance of the relationships that we have with our partners, requestors and supporters. Relationships are mutually beneficial, directed by an unselfish desire to do good.

The past several weeks have provided great examples of what true partnership looks like. I am thankful for our partners and the value that we bring to each other. On behalf of everyone at TEXSAR, my sincere thanks goes to those who have entered into meaningful relationships with us. A few examples remind me of the potential that we have working together.

[Kendra Scott](#) has a philanthropic heart and that spirit permeates the company. They support many causes, including TEXSAR during the July floods, and we felt they deserved special recognition, so we nominated the company for the Governor's Volunteer Award in the Corporate Champion category. We are proud of them winning the award that was presented in April at the Governor's Mansion at an event hosted by the First Lady of Texas.

[Thrivent](#) is another company that promotes the support of nonprofits. Through a variety of incentivized programs, they encourage their employees and clients to support nonprofits. TEXSAR has benefitted from the company's spirit in many ways, most recently when I was invited by Thrivent to participate in an important symposium at Georgetown for nonprofit leaders. The theme was organizational sustainability to ensure ongoing service. It was an honor to be part of that event.

TEXSAR was able to serve on an important mission in Oklahoma with the [Chickasaw Nation](#). The mission was referenced in the [March issue](#) of TEXSAR Dispatch. We are humbled by the trust that others have in the professionalism and capabilities of our members. Because of the success of that mission, we expect to be able to support more efforts of the Bureau of Indian Affairs work related to Murdered and Missing Indigenous People.

It has been said that you can tell a lot about a person by the friends they keep. By that measure, I am continually reminded about the caliber of our professionally trained volunteer members because of the incredible people, agencies and organizations that count TEXSAR among their friends.

- Justin McInnis

News and Announcements

Mark your calendars!

SAVE THE DATE
11TH ANNUAL TEXSAR
Search Party

SEPTEMBER 19, 2026
THE RENAISSANCE HOTEL - AUSTIN
MORE INFO COMING SOON!

Development Corner

Help ensure TEXSAR's readiness to respond by becoming a [Service Above Self](#) monthly donor. Thank you!



For more information about how to support TEXSAR, please contact Dion.McInnis@TEXSAR.org.

MPU Updates

By Patrick Turck, Director of TEXSAR Missing Persons Unit

Every missing person case represents someone who matters deeply to a family, a circle of friends, and a community waiting for answers. Behind every flyer, every search effort, and every late-night phone call is a family living in uncertainty, and that uncertainty can be one of the hardest burdens a person can carry.

During the month of April, the Director of the MPU, along with other staff and leadership, attended several conferences around the country, including the Annual National Missing and Unidentified Persons Conference in Las Vegas and the 2026 Cold Case Conference hosted by the Texas Attorney General's Office Cold Case and Missing Persons Unit and the International Homicide Investigators Association.

Conferences like these are instrumental in continuing to build and strengthen relationships with law enforcement agencies and partner organizations.

Those relationships remain critical to the success of missing persons investigations and search operations, helping improve coordination, communication, and long-term collaboration in future cases.

To date in 2026, TEXSAR has been involved in 10 searches where the subject was located.

Throughout April, TEXSAR deployed to several missions utilizing the MPU and other supporting resources. While no recoveries were made during the month, our teams were able to provide something equally important to many families: hope. Hope that their loved ones have not been forgotten, and reassurance that there are still dedicated people actively searching and working on their behalf.

In addition to active search operations, the MPU's volunteer investigators continue working their assigned cold cases.

Missing persons work requires persistence, patience, attention to detail, and, above all, compassion. Even in difficult cases, we never lose sight of the fact that families deserve answers and loved ones deserve to be found.

As we move forward, we remain committed to strengthening training, expanding resources, and building partnerships that better serve our communities and the families who depend on us.

Never stop searching.

Missing Persons Statistics

- In Texas alone, there were 40,309 missing persons reports in 2025 with 12,080 of those adults.
- The Houston-Galveston Region accounted for 34% of all missing adult cases and 28% of missing child cases in Texas in 2025.

Sources: Texas Center for the Missing

2025: Did you catch these highlights from our annual report?

ADIAT

In 2025, significant enhancements were made to the Automated Drone Image Analysis Tool (ADIAT), a free, open-source platform that uses advanced algorithms to identify areas of interest within digital images. There were 6,000+ downloads across 84 countries, with confirmed finds reported on 3 continents

BeforeDuringAfter

BeforeDuringAfter (B4DA) grew as a statewide resource helping Texas small businesses prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. The program expanded outreach, launched Version 2 of its streamlined web app with enhanced preparedness and response tools, and quickly deployed tailored resources to support businesses impacted by major flooding in Central Texas.

Deployments

- 269 missions
- 67,496 hours
- 860,253 miles
- IRS value of donated time: \$2,348,216
- 48 agency partners

A Glimpse into 2026

We are now on a new trajectory with more than twice the number of members that we had before the July 4th flood event in the Texas Hill Country, an increase in the number and quality of assets and equipment, and additional personnel including volunteer investigators for our Missing Persons Unit as well as staff to support all TEXSAR efforts. These changes will be reflected in a re-brand of TEXSAR in 2026 that will better reflect who we are and what we do. Also, TEXSAR will move into its first-ever central office location in 2026.

You can find the full annual report [here](#).

Safety in an Unpredictable World

By Meg Hinkley, TEXSAR Volunteer and North Division Leader

Many people in the extended TEXSAR family enjoy the outdoors for many of their favorite activities. We felt this first-hand information was important to share.

In 2020, we were visiting my sister-in-law in Charleston, S.C. During the visit, a neighbor stopped by but my sister-in-law warned her that she was cooking a beef tenderloin and probably shouldn't come in the house. Wait, I thought. Since when is the aroma of a delicious beef roast a problem? Well, I learned it could be if you have a condition called Alpha-gal Syndrome (AGS).

AGS, a tick-borne disease, is a potentially life-threatening allergic reaction to a sugar molecule found in most mammals' meat, including beef, pork, lamb and venison. Those with AGS may experience a life-threatening response after eating animal meat or even dairy products like butter, cheese, and ice cream. The allergy can be triggered by just inhaling the smoke of meat that is cooking on a barbeque, smoker, or in an oven.

The allergy is contracted through the bite of the lone star tick (*Amblyomma americanum*). Despite its name, this tick has been most prevalent in the southeastern portions of the US; however, due to climate warming, it has expanded to areas previously too cold for them. In recent years they have been found as far north as New York, as well as pushing westwards into Oklahoma and Texas.



Since I learned about AGS in 2020, my sister-in-law has been diagnosed with it as well. Last year, she needed emergency care after suffering a severe allergic response. The cause of her reaction was initially unknown but because she knew about AGS symptoms and that she had been bitten by a tick weeks before, she told her doctor to test for it. While disappointed to learn she has AGS, she knows she was lucky to be diagnosed so early on. Many suffer for years, or have a fatal allergic response, before receiving an accurate diagnosis.

A fellow TEXSAR member was one of those whose diagnosis took years. He ended up in a serious medical situation before finally being properly diagnosed. There is no cure for AGS and no vaccine to prevent it, but studies have shown that in some cases the allergy can resolve over time if the person avoids future lone star tick bites; however, additional bites from these pests can increase the severity of the allergic response.

Tick-borne illnesses are not new. Most Americans are familiar with Lyme disease, although this disease is still rare in Texas. Other common tick-borne illnesses prevalent in Texas include:

Ehrlichiosis: A bacterial infection causing flu-like symptoms, including fever, headache, and muscle aches, appearing up to 14 days after a bite.

Southern Tick-Associated Rash Illness (STARI): A rash that often resembles the "bullseye" rash of Lyme disease, sometimes accompanied by fatigue and fever.

Spotted Fever Group Rickettsiosis (including Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever): A serious, rapid-onset bacterial disease that causes high fever, headache, and rash.

Tularemia: A severe disease causing skin lesions and swollen lymph nodes.

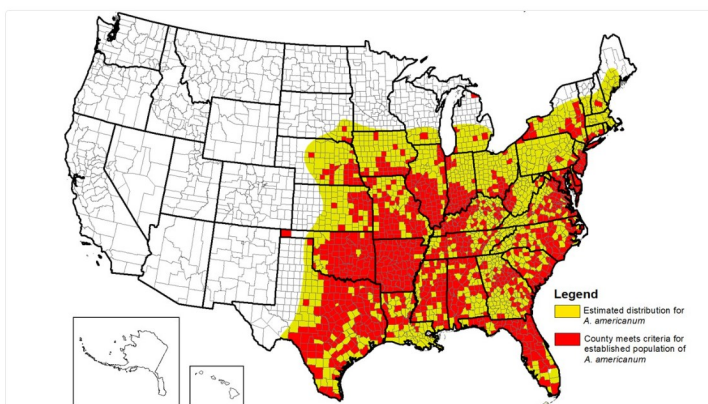
Any of these tick-related illnesses can become serious but AGS demands significant lifestyle changes from those afflicted. My sister-in-law must be on the alert for cross contamination by meats in the kitchen of restaurants and must forgo cheese,

butter, and milk products. Those with AGS also need to be aware of mammal-related products that may be part of some medicines, vaccines, and even anesthesia given for surgeries.

The exact number of AGS cases is unclear due to lack of data collection and the limited number of doctors who know about it. States like Texas are just beginning to track the number of cases but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) documented 450,000 cases in 2025. Experts believe the number is much higher.

In Massachusetts, where lone star tick populations have exploded on Cape Cod, Nantucket, and especially Martha's Vineyard, AGS cases have risen dramatically in the last five years. In 2020 there were two positive tests reported; 750 cases were reported in 2025.

Current Lone Star Tick Territory



What are the Symptoms of AGS?

- Hives or an itchy rash
- Swelling of the lips, tongue, throat, or eyelids
- Gastrointestinal issues – heartburn, indigestion, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Respiratory impacts – coughing, wheezing, difficulty breathing, shortness of breath
- A drop in blood pressure, dizziness, faintness
- Anaphylaxis – a life-threatening condition requiring emergency treatment

These symptoms are similar to other allergic responses, but AGS should be considered if the individual knows they were bitten by a tick in recent months. Like so many Texans, my work with TEXSAR and my passion for hiking puts me at risk for tick bites. What can we do to minimize our risk of becoming a tick's latest snack?



Before spending time outside:

- Know the areas where ticks are prevalent. They live in grassy, wooded areas as well as on your pets if not protected. Any outdoor time walking your dog, gardening, exercising, camping or hunting, could bring you in contact with ticks.
- Treat outer clothing and gear with products containing 0.5% permethrin. Permethrin lasts



through multiple washings (typically up to 6 weeks or 6 washes) and works by paralyzing ticks. Do not apply permethrin directly to the skin.

- Use repellents containing DEET, picaridin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE).
- Talk to your veterinarian about flea and tick prevention for your animals. While our pets are not susceptible to AGS, they can contract other diseases from the lone star tick.

After you come inside:

- Check your clothing for ticks. Tumble dry clothes in a dryer on high heat for 10 minutes to kill ticks on dry clothing after you come indoors.
- Shower within two hours of coming indoors.
- Check your entire body for ticks after being outdoors. You may need the assistance of someone else to check your hair and scalp.
- Removal: Use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick close to the skin and pull upward, according to CDC guidelines.
- Save the tick in a plastic baggie or take a detailed photo for your medical provider in case needed.
- Seek medical care if you develop a fever, rash, or allergic reactions after a tick bite, particularly if the rash expands or is severe.
- Check your pets for ticks. Ticks may be found anywhere on an animal, but they often like soft spots such as the inside of the ears or between the toes and paw pads.

Spending time outdoors has always included the risk of bites and stings from the creatures who live there. I will continue to work and play outdoors but will do so with all the knowledge and tools I have to protect myself.

“And into the forest I go, to lose my mind and find my soul.”
John Muir

TEXSAR is committed to the relationships that it has across the state. Top to bottom:

Deryl Rice and Linna Selbrede went to the Greens Bayou Coalition breakfast to receive their “Blue Heron” award for our work staffing rescue and medical support for the Greens Bayou Regatta and the Greens Bayou cleanup efforts.



TEXSAR members participated in Victims’ Rights Week activities hosted by Harris County Pct. 5’s Victim Assistance Unit. Activities in the annual conference focused on the theme of Listen, Act & Advocate. TEXSAR was one of more than three dozen local organizations that joined in the conference.



It is not hard to tell when TEXSAR is on site. This aerial image from the Austin Rodeo makes it easy to see the blaze orange shirts that has become synonymous with “TEXSAR is on the scene.” TEXSAR members serve in various support roles for a myriad of community events, including medical assistance, incident management, serving as a force multiplier or providing community support.





Training is one of the key factors that differentiates TEXSAR from many other organizations in the search-and-rescue realm.

TEXSAR's Gulf Coast Division recently held a Wilderness Search and Rescue (WSAR) class.



TEXSAR's South Central Division also held a WSAR class.



Sometimes training involves collaborating with partners in organized exercises. Recently, TEXSAR members joined with Williamson County for a training exercise.



Rescue boat operations is one of the many important skills learned for which mission-ready equipment must always be available.

Important Links: Stay in Touch!

[Become a Member](#)

[Donate today!](#)

[Service Above Self Monthly Donor program](#)

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

[20 Years, 20 stories: TEXSAR's 20th Anniversary Celebrated Through Stories of Its Members](#)

["Ready for the Call" video](#)

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

