



FEMA

Volunteer Firemen Create Mobile Command Unit

Eastland County, TX – A 2006 wildfire destroyed nearly 25 percent of Eastland’s land mass burning 60 homes within 12 hours. Part of the problem stemmed from a lack of communication and management. Lessons learned prompted the need for a mobile command unit.

“We had fire departments from our county and the surrounding areas scattered out over 20 miles. People were trying to contain the fire at different sections of the community. Logistics was extremely difficult,” said Steven Watson, professional firefighter and 911 dispatcher.

A meeting was held to evaluate performance following the incident.

“We had a big critique session. What did we do right? What were our problem areas?” Watson said. “The biggest problem was communication. We didn’t have anyone with tools available to them to coordinate efforts.”

As a result, a 2003 motor home was donated to Eastland County. Firemen from Eastland’s eight volunteer fire departments used their skills, on weekends, to create a mobile command unit.

“We went to a trade show in Dallas hosted by Fire Rescue International to look at the mobile command units on display. We consulted with representatives to determine how each piece of equipment was utilized,” Watson said. “Texas Department of Homeland Security gave us \$30,000, and we received a donation of \$20,000. We used that money to equip the unit, and we furnished the labor.” The unit was appraised at \$175,000.

In June 2007 Lake Leon flooded, endangering the lives and property of the residents living on the waterfront. Residents had received a warning to evacuate. Only 35 percent heeded it. Boats and military trucks were used to rescue 150 people.

“Instead of someone running a section of the incident with maps spread out on the hood of a truck and a portable radio that you can barely communicate messages back to the town, we had a unit centrally located at the lake and ready to handle the flood event,” Watson said.

Having the unit on site resulted in smooth rescue efforts.



Eastland County,
Texas



Quick Facts

Sector:

Public

Cost:

\$175,000.00 (Estimated)

Primary Activity/Project:

Mitigation Planning/Disaster Resistant Universities

Primary Funding:

Private funds