



## Emergency Manager Finds New Use for Cable and Cell Phones

### Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

#### *Guadalupe County, Texas*

**Seguin, TX** - Fearing that residents along the Guadalupe River were not receiving flood warnings in a timely manner, Seguin County's emergency management coordinator, Dan Kinsey, developed and piloted an emergency call out system.



"Here we could very easily have a situation where we would have a flash flood. If 20-30 percent of your population doesn't have the traditional home phone, you need to find a way to warn them," said Kinsey.

He took advantage of an automated telephone notification system the county had purchased in 2003. It was set to place calls by zones. "We already had everything in place," Kinsey said. "It's a great tool with a lot of possibilities. It was just a matter of creating a database, collecting the information and getting it into the system."

Kinsey continued, "That database could not just rely on traditional land-line telephone numbers, however. There are so many people using cable phones and cell phones nowadays. Your normal land-line database just doesn't cover enough people."

He drafted an Emergency Call-out System Voluntary Registration form. Participants are required to list the location of their waterfront property, two phone numbers (designating whether they are land-lines, cell phones or cable/internet phones), and an email address.

"You can only register two numbers per household," Kinsey explained. "The reason we don't do more is that it takes approximately one-and-a-half to two minutes per phone call. You don't want to tie up the lines."

Residents are asked to update their numbers in writing, or to notify the Office of Emergency Management if they move out of the flood hazard zone.

However, being able to notify residents is only half of the system. The other half is being able to know when to notify them. Kinsey monitors water flows measured by the Guadalupe River Authority at its hydro-electric dams. Based on those numbers, he can predict when flooding is imminent. "We have to have some way of monitoring the area," he said. "Otherwise it's really too late to call."

While all emergencies cannot be avoided, Kinsey tries to prevent some and manage others in ways that minimize their impact. "As an emergency management coordinator you are somewhat responsible for the safety of the people. It's a time consuming job. A lot of it is public education. It requires good communication. Give them the facts, whether they like it or not," said Kinsey.

#### Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region VI**

State: **Texas**

County: **Guadalupe County**

City/Community: **Seguin**

## Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**  
Hazard Type: **Flooding**  
Activity/Project Type: **Warning Systems; Mitigation Planning/Disaster Resistant Universities**  
Activity/Project Start Date: **12/2005**  
Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**  
Funding Source: **State sources**  
Funding Recipient: **Local Government**

## Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$30,000.00 (Estimated)**

## Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal Disaster? **No**  
Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**  
Tested By Federal Disaster #: **No Federal Disaster specified**  
Year First Tested: **2007**  
Repetitive Loss Property? **No**

## Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.floodsmart.gov>  
Reference URL 2: <http://www.fema.gov/hazard/flood/index.shtm>

## Main Points

- Seguin County's emergency management coordinator developed and piloted an emergency call-out system to alert residents about flooding in their area.
- Information was collected and added to a database.
- He took advantage of an automated telephone notification system the county has purchased in 2003 to start this database.
- Requested two telephone numbers and email address - not only land lines, but cable and cell phone numbers worked as well.
- He monitors water flows measured by the Guadalupe River Authority at its hydro-electric dams. Based on those numbers, he can predict when flooding is imminent.
- Residents are then notified and can move to safety.



Dan Kinsey locating waterfront property on map.



Emergency Callout System Voluntary Registration Form