



TEXAS CRISIS RESILIENCY TEAM

Texas Crisis Resiliency Team After Action Report
West, TX Fertilizer Explosion
April 17, 2013

On April 17, 2013 there was a fire and explosion at the fertilizer plant at West, TX. There were 14 fatalities, over 200 wounded, 150 buildings destroyed, and many more damaged.

The next day, I sent information to members of the Texas Crisis Resiliency Team asking for names of those, who might be available to respond either as a Crisis Response Team or as a Chaplain. I sent the list of Baptist Chaplains was also sent to the Chaplain Coordinator for Texas Baptist Men (Henrietta Gentry).

I also participated regularly in the State VOAD teleconference. I informed them of our availability both for Crisis Response Teams and Chaplains. The Joint Assistance Center (JAC) started operating in West on April 20.

The Texas VOAD requested one to two chaplains to work at the JAC on April 21, and we started providing chaplain support on April 22 and continued until the closure of the JAC on April 28. Chaplain Ruth Bryan lived close to West. She worked daily on the scene and coordinated the schedule of chaplains. The goal was to have chaplains from the Dallas / Waco area to provide support. They would spend the day there and return home. This reduced potential problems associated with lodging and meals, and travel expenses.

The chaplains, who provided support at West were: Ruth Bryan, Donna Latta, Marla Bearden, Bobby Smith, David Clements, Ines Lowe, Larry Lowe, Paul Chacko, Gregg Burdette, Paul Sutton, Jerry Carter, and Kent Lucas. All these chaplains were very well trained and had various types of trauma training including NOVA, CISM, and Clinical Pastoral Education.

POSITIVES / SUSTAIN:

- Communication with Texas Crisis Resiliency Team Members, and compiling list of those who might be available.
- Cooperation with Texas Baptist Men.
- Chaplains of the Texas Crisis Resiliency Team were respectful of other faith traditions.

- Donna Latta was the first chaplain to work at the JAC. She shared information from her experience, and helped facilitate the work of other chaplains.
- Participation in the Texas VOAD teleconferences was important.

NEGATIVES / IMPROVE:

- Communication. Not everyone reads e-mails regularly. Consider alternate means of communication.
- More chaplains need to be trained with Texas Baptist Men to provide support. This includes Yellow Cap Training and Chaplain Disaster Response Chaplains.
- Badges need to be current for Texas Crisis Resiliency Members, and all Texas Crisis Resiliency Team members need to purchase the shirts for Texas Crisis Resiliency Team. Texas Baptist Chaplains need to purchase the Texas Baptist Chaplain Shirts.
- Need more people trained. Many people desired to respond, but because of work schedules and other commitments could not respond.

DISCUSSION:

I sent an initial e-mail to all the Texas Crisis Resiliency Team members, asking for those who could respond as a NOVA CRT and / or a chaplain for Texas Baptist Men. I realized that not everyone was reading their e-mail regularly. I also sent out a text message using URGENTXT, and also sent text messages to several people that I needed to talk with. I decided to set up a Facebook page for the Texas Crisis Resiliency Team to aid with future communication. We must continue to look for a variety of ways to communicate, because people do not all use the same systems. Some people never text. Some people never use Facebook. Some people never use e-mail. If I did not get enough response with these methods, I planned to go down the list and call people. That is very time consuming, but in some cases will need to be done.

I sent a list of all the Baptist Chaplains, who were willing to respond, to Henrietta Gentry. She was coordinating the Chaplain teams for Texas Baptist Men. We had several chaplains, who had all the qualifications, but many who were willing to serve did not have the Yellow Cap Training or current Texas Baptist Men badge. The other limiting factor was that most people could only go certain days, because of their work schedules. Still the process went well, but we need to get more chaplains trained and ready.

Chaplain Ruth Bryan worked as a chaplain in Waco. She provided initial response there and additional support on the Waco / West area. Although she did not have NOVA training, she contacted me and volunteered to be a part of the team. Her CPE training gave her the essential skills she needed to respond as a team member. Because of her proximity to West, she was able

to serve a valuable piece not only in the initial response, but in the coordination of the chaplain support at the JAC.

Ruth Bryan's availability highlights the importance of having people available in the general area of the disaster. One older doctor being interviewed on television commented that he had trained all his life for mass casualties. He had participated in many exercises, but had never had to utilize that training until NOW! It is the same way with our NOVA crisis response training. We hope we do not have to use the training in response to a major disaster, but we must be prepared to respond.

Coordinating the schedules of volunteers is a difficult task. People volunteer with the intent of assisting, but work schedules change and in one case one of the volunteers had a death of a close friend that impacted her availability. The requirements also change and schedules need changing. Ruth Bryan did a great job of working these issues.

Our chaplain support at the JAC came as a result of our participation with the Texas VOAD and active involvement with the teleconferences during the event. The request for chaplain support here was not limited to Baptist Chaplains. While all those that responded were Baptists, this response was open to other denominations in our Texas Crisis Resiliency Team. We do have chaplains from other faith groups in the Texas Crisis Resiliency Team. If this need represents a pattern of chaplain support, we may need to look into ways to clearly identify Chaplains in this category. We have shirts for Texas Baptist Chaplains, but the other members just have shirts with the Texas Crisis Resiliency Team logo.

The quality of our chaplains responding was outstanding. Donna Latta did a tremendous job of setting the standard for care. She provided a listening, caring, and supportive attitude. Her respect for different faith traditions was appreciated and noted by others working at the scene. She emphasized the importance of not proselytizing.

Almost all the chaplains commented about other chaplain groups doing inappropriate responses and proselytizing. It is beyond our area of responsibility to address this issue, except to ensure the continued quality response of our organization. This is an issue that needs to be addressed through the Incident Command System. Emergency managers need to address the issue of how to deal with inappropriate groups during the planning process prior to a disaster.

The chaplains of the Texas Crisis Resiliency Team were supplemented by chaplains of the Baylor Medical System. All these chaplains qualify to be members of the team, but had not officially joined the team. Their support was greatly appreciated.

The Texas Crisis Resiliency Team is still a developing organization. While Texas Baptist Chaplains have conducted NOVA Training for about ten years, the Texas Crisis Resiliency Team is just a couple of years old. **Team members still need identifying shirts, ID badges, etc.** We are addressing these issues, but need to continue to improve.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Be prepared to respond. Just because nothing has happened doesn't mean it won't. After it happens is too late to prepare.
2. All Texas Baptist Chaplains on the Texas Crisis Resiliency Team need to:
 - a. Have Yellow Cap Training
 - b. Take Texas Baptist Disaster Chaplain Course
 - c. Valid Texas Baptist Men's Badge
3. All other Crisis Response Team Members need to have:
 - a. Shirts identifying themselves as members of the team.
 - b. Current Badges (this includes background checks)
4. Continue to use a variety of methods of communication with Team Members.
5. Conduct more NOVA training classes. We need more people trained and ready to respond to disasters in their local areas.

Dan Franklin
Texas Crisis Resiliency Team Coordinator



Apartment complex destroyed by explosion at West.