

Rep. John Turner | House District 114 Email Update

Date: October 29, 2019
Subject: Dallas Tornado Recovery Update - Oct. 29

Friends,

As we continue recovering from last week's tornado, we can be proud of the way our first responders, schools, churches, businesses, and nonprofits stepped up to help our city. We have a resilient and giving community in Dallas. But especially for those most directly affected, the destruction is real and the work ahead will be significant. As your Representative for District 114, which suffered some of the most severe damage, I want to take this opportunity to provide a few updates.

Schools. Due to severe structural damage, Dallas ISD moved about 3,000 students from Walnut Hill Elementary, Cary Middle School, and Thomas Jefferson High School to new facilities. They were back to school at different locations within three days of the storm. This was an amazing effort, and I can't say enough about the administrators, faculty, and staff who made it possible. These schools will continue to need our whole community's support.

Damage Assessment. FEMA and the Texas Department of Emergency Management are in the process of conducting damage assessments. Among other things, FEMA will determine whether the damage meets the thresholds to recommend a federal disaster declaration, which could clear the way for certain kinds of federal assistance (such as assistance to local governments to help pay for their cleanup and repair costs). Our office will be in contact with them and will be prepared to answer any questions you have about this process.

Resources and Contacts. Last week, we generated a list of resources and points of contact for those affected by the storm. We have revised and updated that list below. We are also available to provide any guidance we can. You can email us at District114.Turner@House.Texas.Gov, or call us in the Austin office at (512) 463-0576 or the Dallas District Office at (214) 234-7625.

Despite the tragedy of homes, businesses, and school buildings destroyed, the last week has demonstrated again and again the spirit of our community. Neighbors, volunteers, church groups, scout troops, and others showed up in debris-covered streets and yards, with saws and work gloves, ready to help. To those dealing with the significant loss of property, we support you and we are here for you. To those who have given of their time, funds, toil, and skills to help our community recover, we are truly grateful. Your help will continue to be needed in the months ahead.

John

Direct Assistance, Debris Cleanup, and Other Resources and Volunteer Efforts

- The Red Cross is offering emergency financial assistance to households whose residences sustained major damage or were destroyed. For more information, visit <https://rdcrss.org/36bTSMI>.
- A Multi-Agency Resource Center is open between 9:00 AM-5:00 PM out of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints at 9509 Midway Rd., Dallas, TX 75220 at least through Friday, November 1st. The center houses various organizations providing relief.

- The Crisis Cleanup Hotline number has been activated for North Texas. From now through November 1, 2019, residents can call 833-556-2476 to register their home for clean up assistance.
- *D Magazine* has a useful list of other resources and volunteer efforts: <https://interactive.dmagazine.com/d-gives/>.

Lost Documents and Records

- Birth and Death Certificates: Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)
 - Visit <https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/vs/default.shtm> or call 888-963-7111
- Proof of Address/Residency: Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS)
 - Visit <http://www.dps.texas.gov/internetforms/Forms/DL-5.pdf> or call 512-424-2000
- Real Estate and Property Records: Dallas County Clerk
 - Visit <https://www.dallascounty.org/services/records.php> or call 214-653-7099
- Texas Driver Licenses: Texas Department of Public Safety
 - Visit <https://www.txdps.state.tx.us/DriverLicense/replace.htm> or call 512-424-2600
- Vehicle Titles: Texas Department of Motor Vehicles
 - Visit <http://txdmv.gov/motorists/buying-or-selling-a-vehicle/get-a-copy-of-your-title> or call 888-368-4689

Insurance Claims

- Information to help with the insurance claims process is available on the Office of Public Insurance Counsel's website at www.opic.texas.gov/residential-property-insurance/claims/.
- The Texas Department of Insurance also offers a toll-free Consumer Help Line 1-800-252-3439 to assist callers with insurance questions and concerns. The help line is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Additional recovery information available at <https://www.tdi.texas.gov/consumer/storms/recoverytips.html>.

Potential Scams and Contractor Fraud

- The Texas Office of the Attorney General offers the following tips to avoid contractor fraud during the clean-up and rebuilding process.
 - Contact an insurance adjuster to get an estimate of the damage and repair cost.
 - Don't sign a check from your insurance company over to a contractor.
 - Only do business with licensed or bonded contractors or builders. Get multiple estimates.
 - Be cautious of contractors who solicit services door-to-door, especially those that are unfamiliar or from out of town and try to pressure you into signing a contract on the spot.
 - Get the salesperson's license plate number.
 - Consult the Better Business Bureau to ensure you are working with a trustworthy business.
 - Ask for referrals from people you trust and for references from contractors.

- Get more than one estimate on work, so you know if you're being overcharged. Don't be rushed into signing a contract and never pay in full up-front for promised work.
 - Never pay cash up front to anyone for repairs. Consider paying by credit card to avail yourself of additional protections.
 - Get everything in writing, including the terms of any warranty, and keep a copy of all documents.
- Additional information to help tornado and storm victims protect against disaster-related scams is available on the attorney general's website at <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/cpd/disaster-scams>.
 - Consumers can also report suspicious or fraudulent activity by filing a complaint online at <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/cpd/file-a-consumer-complaint>.

Potential Price Gouging

- Price gouging is defined as engaging in any of the following activities after the Governor or the President has declared a disaster:
 - Selling or leasing fuel, food, medicine, lodging, building materials, construction tools, or another necessity at an exorbitant or excessive price; or
 - Demanding an exorbitant or excessive price in connection with the sale or lease of fuel, food, medicine, lodging, building materials, construction tools, or another necessity.
- The Dallas tornadoes were declared a disaster by Governor Abbott, so the Texas Attorney General has authority to prosecute any business that engages in price gouging related to the tornadoes.
- Please note that high prices alone do not mean that price gouging has taken place, as businesses are generally allowed to determine their prices. However, if businesses raise the price of necessary products or services to exorbitant or excessive rates to take advantage of the disaster, price gouging may have occurred.
- To report a suspected price gouging incident, please file a consumer complaint with the Attorney General here: <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/consumer-protection/file-consumer-complaint>.

Donations - City and Public Schools

- The City of Dallas is collecting monetary donations through the City of Dallas Emergency Assistance Fund. <https://dallemerasstfund.kimbia.com/dallemerasstfund>.
- Dallas ISD is collecting monetary assistance to support affected students and teachers through the Dallas Education Foundation. <https://def.kimbia.com/tornadoesdisdsupport>.
- Richardson ISD is coordinating assistance to affected students and staff. <http://www.risd.org/group/districtnews/storm-response-update-and-ways-to-help.html>.

Our Contact Information

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