



The City of Plano recently held 2 events related to Emergency Preparedness that were very informative and timely. As we approach spring when Texas is most at risk for damaging storms, I would like to share the learning from these 2 sessions.

- Texas leads the nation in terms of dollar value of damage caused by disasters. In 2021, Texas reached \$12 billion in damage from disasters. Texas disaster damage value had been very stable from 1980 to 2007 when it ranged \$2-4 billion. Since 2008, this amount has rapidly increased to the 2021 record of \$12B. Fortunately, 2022 was down from the 2021 peak but still much higher than seen in past years. A result of this escalation in property damage has been the exit of insurance companies writing homeowner policies in Texas as well as dramatic increases in homeowners insurance premiums that many (if not all) of us have experienced the past few years. Florida (hurricanes) and California (fires and floods) have also experienced similar insurance company exits and rising insurance costs.
- Plano Department of Emergency Management consists of a team whose responsibilities include notifying Plano residents of pending disasters via the siren system and City Call (also known as Code Red) and then coordinating response to the disaster via existing Plano resources such as Plano Police, Fire, Department of Public Works and more. When needed, Plano Emergency Management will reach out for assistance from surrounding cities and towns. This team would also go to Texas state resources if the disaster exceeds the capabilities of regional resources and even to FEMA in the event of a major disaster that exceeds the capabilities of the State of Texas to fully address.
- The siren system in Plano consists of 41 sirens. They are activated when one or more of the following conditions occur:
 1. Winds in excess of 70 mph
 2. Hail greater than 1.5"
 3. Tornado warning issued by meteorologists or tornado spotted by trained tornado spotters
 4. Other emergencies where residents should seek shelter immediately.
- If any of the 4 conditions exist anywhere in Plano, all 41 sirens will go off and will wail for 3 minutes. Note that it is possible that the dangerous condition may exist in just one part of the City, but sirens across the entire City are activated for the emergency. The sirens no longer have any voice messages, which they did a number of years ago. The reason for this is that people would come outside to listen to the verbal message when they should be immediately seeking shelter inside their home. Additionally, a number of older sirens do not have the capability to store multiple verbal messages. When you hear the sirens during non-test days, you should immediately take shelter inside your home in a room without windows and seek information about the emergency from Plano Emergency Management website or social media (website address and link to QR codes to follow Plano Emergency Management on social media are included at the end of this document). Also, you can often obtain information from local news service apps and/or websites.
- Please note that the siren system is generally tested once per month, usually at noon on the first Wednesday of the month. In this case the sirens will have a verbal message stating, "Test".



- Plano Emergency Management strongly recommends all residents sign up for Plano City Call (also known as Code Red). If you want to receive Emergency Alerts, you can [CLICK HERE](#) or text 99411 from your phone. This system gives you the option to receive text messages, emails, and/or automated calls when an emergency is declared.
- Also recommended by Plano Emergency Management is building a family emergency kit that includes 3 days of supplies. This kit should be packed and ready to go in the event that you and your family need to leave your home due to an emergency. The kit should include:
 - Non-perishable food
 - Medicines
 - First aid kit
 - Clothing
 - Water (1 gallon for each person for 3 days)
 - Cash
 - Identification
 - Food, water and other items for any of your pets
 - NOAA battery operated weather radio (these can be purchased on Amazon or other retailers, cost for most models range \$20-30)
- Plano Emergency Management emphasized the need to have homeowners' insurance that will fully cover the costs to replace your home in the event of a catastrophe. Like so many other costs, building costs have escalated significantly over the past few years. Being under-insured can lead to serious problems for you and your family. As of 2023, FEMA will only cover up to \$39,700 for housing assistance and \$39,700 for other assistance. This will likely not make you whole in the event you are under-insured.
- Also recommended by Plano Emergency Management is the development of a family communication plan. This plan should include all family members checking in with each other or with a contact (friend or family) that lives away from Plano and may not be subjected to the same disaster event as being experienced in Plano area. With the possibility of local telecommunications systems being overwhelmed, it was highlighted by Plano Emergency Management Director that you sometimes have more success contacting family members by contacting someone outside of the immediate disaster area. They then make contact with other members of your family that are in the Plano area.

You can click on one of the following links to review the [Plano Emergency Management presentation](#), [Sign-up for Emergency Alerts](#), view [Emergency Management's Facebook](#) page, or view [Emergency Management's page on Twitter/"X"](#).

Hopefully, we never have to experience a major disaster, but the **message is to be prepared**. You can learn more about Plano emergency preparedness and what you can do to be prepared in the event of a disaster at <https://www.plano.gov/301/Emergency-Management>.