

BURNET COUNTY, TEXAS

After Action Review

Executive Summary for Commissioners Court

July 2025 Flooding Event • Prepared July 2026 • Heald & Heritage LLC

Following the catastrophic flooding of July 4–5 and July 13–14, 2025, Burnet County commissioned an independent After Action Review (AAR) through Heald & Heritage LLC under competitive bid RFP #26-4060-01. The purpose of this review was not to assign blame, but to document what worked, identify where improvements are needed, and produce a concrete plan to make Burnet County better prepared for the next major event. This summary presents the key findings and corrective actions for the Commissioners Court.

Review Scope

- 8 Core Capabilities evaluated
- 12 Stakeholder agencies interviewed
- 90+ agencies contacted by survey
- TDEM SitReps, NWS records, CAPCOG WebEOC, and Everbridge activation records reviewed
- HSEEP 2020 methodology (federal standard)

Participating Agencies

- Burnet County Sheriff's Office
- Burnet Fire Dept / Marble Falls Area VFD
- Granite Shoals PD and Fire
- CAPCOG, TPWD, Denton County OEM
- ARK of Highland Lakes, Burnet VFW
- Burnet County Constable

63**Rescues Conducted**
Against 5 confirmed deaths**5****Air Evacuations**
Texas National Guard**31****Corrective Actions**
Identified across 12 capabilities**90+****Agencies Participating**
State, local, NGO, volunteer

What Burnet County Did Well

The July 2025 response demonstrated genuine commitment, courage, and community strength under an extraordinary event. Several capabilities performed effectively and deserve recognition.

STRENGTH

Rapid disaster declaration. County Judge Bryan Wilson signed the Local State of Disaster within hours of the event onset, enabling immediate access to state resources and mutual aid.

STRENGTH

Exceptional rescue outcomes. Sixty-three people were rescued against five confirmed deaths during a 1-in-1,000-year rainfall event — a ratio that reflects extraordinary field performance by first responders under extreme conditions.

STRENGTH

Early warning monitoring. Emergency management staff monitored LCRA HydroMet

H	products from early afternoon on July 4 — more than 8 hours before the first Flash Flood Warning — and kept first responders informed of developing conditions overnight.
STRENGTH H	WarnCentralTexas activated. Burnet County OEM activated the CAPCOG Everbridge notification system on July 5, 2025 with three geo-targeted notifications covering different areas of the county across 11 delivery channels.
STRENGTH H	MARC operations highly effective. The Multi-Agency Resource Center was operational by July 11 with 17 partner organizations. ARK of Highland Lakes rated county coordination at 5 out of 5 and confirmed all resource needs were met.
STRENGTH H	Strong state resource integration. Over 18 days, Burnet County successfully coordinated DPS Tactical Marine Unit, Texas Military Department ground and air assets, Texas Task Forces 1 and 2, and 40 TDEM ISTF members — a substantial multi-agency response.
STRENGTH H	Partner agencies already taking action. Multiple agencies have independently implemented corrective actions since July 2025: BCSO purchased new radios and submitted a budget request for more; Granite Shoals PD completed ICS 300 and 400 training; drone lessons learned were incorporated into BCSO policy; and the Lake LBJ Task Force is forming among south-end agencies.

Where the County Can Strengthen Future Response

The review identified improvement opportunities across three primary areas. These are not failures — they are the normal output of any rigorous after action process, and the July 2025 event was an extraordinary test of any county's capabilities. Many Texas counties far larger than Burnet would show similar gaps under the same conditions.

1. Command Structure and Coordination

The county operated with multiple separate command structures during the event — a county EOC, a north-area command post, and the City of Marble Falls independently standing up their own EOC. Field personnel in different areas of the county were not always aware of what was happening elsewhere. An Incident Action Plan was not available until day two or three. These gaps are systemic in nature and are common findings in counties that have not recently conducted realistic large-scale exercises.

2. Communications

The county's digital radio system has known dead zones, particularly in the Balcones Canyonlands area. The Cell on Wheels deployed during the event had a limited two-mile range and did not arrive until five days after the event began. No established protocol existed to simultaneously notify all mutual aid agencies when a Mayday-level event was declared. No common platform existed for county leadership to communicate in real time during the event.

3. Community Preparedness and Volunteer Integration

The county's emergency notification system (WarnCentralTexas) requires residents to voluntarily register their cell phones — and with Texas holding the highest wireless alert opt-out rate in the country, an unknown number of residents may not have received the county's alerts. The STEAR program (a free TDEM registry for residents with disabilities or mobility limitations who need extra evacuation help) has no confirmed county promotion or enrollment process. Volunteer organizations including the VFW and faith-based groups responded on their own but were not integrated into county operations until several days into the event.

The Corrective Action & Improvement Plan

The Corrective Action and Improvement Plan (CAIP) translates AAR findings into 31 specific, assigned, time-bound actions organized by priority. Below is a summary of the highest-impact items.

Near-Term (30–60 Days) — Zero or Low Cost

- Add WarnCentralTexas signup link to county website
- Launch annual resident registration drive with CAPCOG
- Confirm STEAR Data Custodian enrollment with TDEM
- Implement Signal for county leader communications
- Build consolidated emergency contact directory
- Develop Mayday dispatch protocol

Medium-Term (60–120 Days)

- Develop geographic ICS EOP annex
- Launch quarterly 2-hour EOC activation trainings
- Pre-designate Incident Management Teams by county area
- Establish county VOAD with pre-defined roles for VFW, ARK, CERT
- Configure Everbridge internal leadership notification groups
- Replace expired water rescue PFDs across county departments

Longer-Term (120–180 Days) — Investment Required

The following items require budget or grant investment and are recommended for prioritization in the next county budget cycle:

- County-level flood tabletop exercise — joint with City of Marble Falls (FEMA PrepToolkit templates available at no cost; exercise coordination support available from CAPCOG and TDEM at no cost to the county)
- Radio coverage assessment and repeater infrastructure — FEMA BRIC and UASI grants available; BCSO has already purchased new radios and submitted budget request
- Regional swiftwater training program for county fire departments — FEMA grant eligible; ESD has committed to pursuing grant funding
- Bridge and low water crossing vulnerability assessment — coordinate with TxDOT and the City of Burnet flood planning study already underway
- EOC volunteer administrative staffing program — Texas Disaster Volunteer Registry (free, TDEM-maintained) enables pre-screening of community volunteers for EOC support roles

AAR/CAIP Process and Next Steps

How the AAR Was Conducted

Recommended Next Steps

The After Action Review was conducted by Heald & Heritage LLC under competitive bid. All findings follow federal HSEEP 2020 standards — the same methodology used by FEMA, TDEM, and Texas counties statewide. Findings are documented at the organizational and capability level. No individual is named in connection with areas for improvement.

Document Status

After Action Report	Rev 2 — Ready for approval
Improvement Plan	Rev 1 — Ready for review
Contract Status	RFP #26-4060-01 • PO 26-3641

1. Commissioners Court accepts and approves the After Action Report.
2. Judge Wilson authorizes release of the AAR to stakeholder agencies.
3. Acting EMC convenes department heads within 30 days to formally assign CAIP corrective action ownership.
4. Commissioners Court designates a quarterly CAIP review item on the regular court calendar.
5. CAPCOG and TDEM DD12 are engaged for exercise design and no-cost technical assistance.

Point of Contact

Clayton Heald
Heald & Heritage LLC
(936) 714-3111
cheald@healdandheritage.com

“Our community lost an icon, a role model, and, for many in this room, we lost a friend.”

This After Action Review is Burnet County’s commitment to honoring that loss — not by looking back with regret, but by building forward with purpose.