

ANNEX U

LEGAL

Hidalgo county

Jurisdiction

APPROVAL & IMPLEMENTATION

Annex U

Legal

Signature
Hidalgo County Judge, Ramon Garcia

Date

Signature

Date

ANNEX U

LEGAL

I. AUTHORITY

- A. See Section I of the Basic Plan for general authorities.
- B. Texas Local Government Code, Chapter 203 (Management and Preservation of Records), and Chapter 229 (Miscellaneous Regulatory Authority of Municipalities).

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this annex is to make provision for legal services during emergency situations or when such situations appear imminent, and to provide guidance for invoking the emergency powers of government when necessary.

III. EXPLANATION OF TERMS

EOC	Emergency Operating Center
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
IC	Incident Commander
TAC	Texas Administrative Code
TGC	Texas Government Code

IV. SITUATION & ASSUMPTIONS

A. Situation

The County faces a number of hazards that could threaten public health and safety and personal and government property; see Section IV.A of the basic plan for a summary of these hazards. Legal issues requiring timely resolution may arise during pre-disaster hazard mitigation designed to lessen the effects of known hazards, during pre-disaster preparedness activities designed to enhance the local capability to respond to a disaster, during the actual response to a disaster, or during the post-disaster recovery process.

B. Assumptions

1. Local emergency preparedness plans and programs should have a sound legal basis.
2. In responding to major emergencies and disasters, local officials may be required to take extraordinary measures to protect public health and safety and preserve property. They will also require timely advice regarding the legality of proposed measures.
3. Implementation of measures to protect public health and safety and preserve property during emergency recovery and mitigation activities generally require issuance of appropriate legal documents. These should be prepared by competent legal service professionals.

V. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

A. General

1. Emergency Declaration
 - a. Pursuant to Chapter 433, Texas Government Code (TGC), the chief elected official or the governing body of a city or county may request the Governor declare a state of emergency for a jurisdiction or a portion thereof. For purposes of this statute, an emergency exists in the following situations: riot or unlawful assembly by three or more persons acting together by use of force or violence, the existence of a clear and present danger of violence, or a natural or man-made disaster. The Governor may proclaim a state of emergency and issue directives to control and terminate the emergency and protect life and property. Directives issued by the Governor for a state of emergency expire 72 hours after issuance; however, successive states of emergency may be declared by the Governor. A sample request for an emergency declaration is provided in Appendix 1.
 - b. The emergency declaration process is generally not used for natural or man-made disasters because: (1) it requires action by the Governor to resolve local problems rather than facilitating action by local officials, (2) the Governor's directives require advance notice before they become effective, and (3) directives are of very limited duration – 72 hours. Hence, a disaster declaration may be more appropriate for responding to natural or technological emergencies. An emergency declaration may be appropriate for security-related incidents where local law enforcement resources are inadequate to handle the situation.
 - c. If the actions taken by the Governor after an initial emergency declaration do not resolve the emergency situation, the chief elected official or governing body may request that the emergency declaration be continued. If the local emergency situation that was the basis for an emergency declaration is resolved before the Governor's directives expire, it is desirable to advise the Governor that the emergency declaration is no longer required.

2. Disaster Declaration

- a. The Texas Disaster Act, Chapter 418, TGC, provides that the presiding officer of the governing body of a political subdivision (the County Judge of a county or the Mayor of a municipality) may declare a local state of disaster. A disaster declaration may be issued when a disaster has occurred or appears imminent. Chief elected officials, in order to respond to or recover from a significant natural or man-made disaster, typically use the disaster declaration process. A sample disaster declaration is provided in Appendix 2. Copies of a disaster declaration should be filed with the Governor's Division of Emergency Management (GDEM) and the [County Clerk/City Secretary].
- b. Chapter 418.108 of the Texas Government Code provides that county judges and mayors may, when a state of disaster has been declared, exercise similar powers on an appropriate local scale as have been granted to the Governor in the Disaster Act. Among those powers is the authority suspend procedural laws and rules, use public and private resources to respond to the disaster, control the movement of people, restrict the sale and transportation of certain items, and take a number of other actions. Once a state of disaster is declared, a city or county may enact an emergency ordinance or order describing the specific emergency regulations that are to be put into effect during the disaster. A sample emergency powers ordinance is provided in Appendix 5.
- c. Texas statutes (Chapter 229 of the Local Government Code and Chapter 433 of the Texas Government Code) limit the seizure and/or confiscation of any firearm or ammunition from individuals, except under specific circumstances.
- d. A disaster declaration may not be continued in force for more than seven days unless renewed by the [Commissioners Court/City Council]. A sample ordinance/court order extending a disaster declaration is provided in Appendix 3. The [Commissioners Court/City Council] may terminate a state of disaster at any time; this approach is typically used when the threat that gave rise to the disaster declaration has subsided. Alternatively, the [Commissioners Court/City Council] may chose to simply let the declaration expire by taking no action to extend it. A sample ordinance/court order terminating a disaster declaration is provided in Appendix 4.

3. Continuity of Government

Pursuant to Chapter 418 of the Texas Government Code, the Commissioners Court of the County has adopted a plan for the continuity of the functions of the County during a presidential and/or gubernatorial declared disaster or other catastrophic event. The County Continuity of Operations Plan provides for:

- a. The delegation of administrative duties of the Commissioners Court or any official or employee of the[County to another appropriate person;
- b. The establishment of orders of succession for performing essential functions of the County;

- c. The establishment of meeting procedures for the Commissioners Court; and
- d. The plan does not provide for the delegation of a duty required by the Texas Constitution.
- e. The waiving of the requirement for a quorum for members of the Commissioners Court, except where otherwise prohibited by law, if:
 - 1) The County is wholly or partly in the area of a disaster declared by the presidential or governor; and
 - 2) A majority of the Commissioners Court are unable to be present at a meeting as a result of the disaster.

4. Authority for Evacuations

State law provides a County Judge or mayor with the authority to order the evacuation of all or part of the population from a stricken or threatened area within their respective jurisdictions.

5. County Regulation of Outdoor Burning & Use of Fireworks

One of the effects of drought conditions is an increased threat of wildfires. Many municipalities have enacted ordinances that prohibit or restrict open fires within their corporate limits at all times. The Local Government Code gives counties authority to mitigate the risk of wildfire by restricting outdoor burning and the use of fireworks in unincorporated areas under certain circumstances.

- a. Pursuant to §240.906 of the Local Government Code, The Commissioners Court of a county by order may restrict outdoor burning in general or outdoor burning of a particular substance in all or part of the unincorporated area of the county if drought conditions have been determined by the Texas Forest Service to exist and county officials find that circumstances exist in all or parts of the unincorporated areas of the county such that outdoor burning would create a public safety hazard. The normal procedure for implementing restrictions on outdoor burning is for the County Judge to issue a disaster declaration pursuant to the Texas Disaster Act based on the imminent threat of wildfire. Then, the Commissioners Court issues an emergency order restricting outdoor burning in all unincorporated areas of the county or portions of those areas. A sample disaster declaration based on a threat of wildfire is provided in Appendix 6. A sample Commissioners Court order banning outdoor burning is provided in Appendix 7.
- b. Pursuant to §240.904 of the Local Government Code, counties may restrict the use of fireworks in unincorporated areas of the county if drought conditions have been determined to exist by the Texas Forest Service. An order adopted must specify the period during which outdoor burning is prohibited or restricted. The period may not extend beyond the 90th day after the date the order is adopted. Such orders for the Fourth of July fireworks season must be issued by June 15th ending sales by midnight July 4th and by December 15th ending sales by midnight January 1st for the December fireworks season.

B. Activities by Phases of Emergency Management

1. Prevention

- a. Brief the elected officials and department heads on possible liabilities arising from disaster operations, procedures for invoking the emergency powers of government, and legal documents relating to emergency powers.
- b. Maintain current copies of existing disaster-related laws, regulations, and orders.
- c. Develop local procedures for invoking emergency powers.
- d. Prepare sample legal documents (included in this annex) for approval by elected officials.

2. Preparedness

- a. Ensure county emergency call-out rosters include the County Attorney, who should maintain current telephone numbers and addresses for the legal staff.
- b. Review plans and procedures.
- c. Review mutual aid agreements submitted to the jurisdiction for approval and prepare mutual aid agreements to be submitted to other jurisdictions for approval.

3. Response

- a. Advise the County Judge and emergency services staff on legal implications of response activities.
- b. Prepare, have approved and signed, and disseminate legal documents declaring a disaster, terminating a disaster declaration, or invoking emergency powers, if required.
- c. Advise the Incident Commander (IC) on legal matters, such as emergency proclamations, legality of evacuation orders, and legal rights and restrictions pertaining to media access.

4. Recovery

- a. Advise county officials on legal aspects of recovery operations.
- b. Assist county officials in preparing emergency ordinances, permits, applications for state or federal assistance, grant applications, and, if necessary, litigation.

VI. ORGANIZATION & ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

A. General.

Overall responsibility for providing legal services to the County Judge, the Commissioners Court, department heads, and other local officials during an emergency rests with the County Attorney. The County Attorney will be assisted by his or her subordinates.

B. Task Assignments

1. County Judge

- a. Will take such actions that are legal and necessary to manage the disaster at hand.
- b. If the situation warrants, may declare a local state of disaster. Issuance of a local disaster declaration is advisable if an emergency situation has resulted in substantial damage to privately-owned or government property and state or federal assistance will be needed to recover from the incident. If a local disaster declaration is issued, it shall be given prompt and general publicity.
- c. If the situation warrants, may request the Governor to declare a state of emergency.
- d. If requesting state assistance to cope with a local disaster, should attach copies of any local disaster declaration that has been issued to the request for state assistance. See Annex J, Damage Assessment, for further information.

2. County Attorney

- a. Advise county elected officials and department heads regarding the emergency powers of local government and necessary procedures for invoking measures to:
 - 1) suspend procedural laws and rules
 - 2) establish curfews
 - 3) restrict or deny access to a disaster area
 - 4) control the movement of persons and occupancy of premises in a disaster area
 - 5) implement wage, price, and rent control;
 - 6) establish rationing for critical supplies
 - 7) limit or restrict use of water or other utilities
 - 8) use any publicly owned resource to respond to the disaster
 - 9) commandeer private property, subject to compensation requirements, to respond to the disaster
 - 10) remove debris from publicly or privately owned property
 - 11) restrict outdoor burning and use of fireworks
- b. Review and advise [county/city] officials on possible liabilities arising from disaster operations, including the exercising of any or all of the above powers.
- c. Prepare and recommend legislation to implement the emergency powers that may be required during an emergency.

- d. Advise county officials and department heads on record keeping requirements and other documentation necessary for the exercising of emergency powers.
 - e. Prepare and keep current this annex.
 - f. During an emergency, report instances of overcharging for emergency supplies, equipment, and repair materials to the Consumer Affairs section of the Office of the Attorney General.
3. County Clerk
- a. Publish required agenda of meetings.
 - b. Prepare a record of public meetings
 - c. Receive a copy of disaster declarations and documents extending or terminating a state of disaster.
 - d. Ensure proper protection of all records.

VII. DIRECTION & CONTROL

- A. General.** The County Attorney is responsible for providing legal services to the County Judge, Commissioners Court and department heads and for preparing all legal documents necessary for the conduct of emergency operations and the exercise of emergency powers. Supervisors will exercise their usual supervisory responsibilities over legal personnel.
- B. Coordination.** The County Attorney will designate a person to coordinate with the County Judge and the EOC, if activated. The County Attorney will identify staff members to be called for emergency duty and will designate those responsible for contacting such staff members.
- C. Line of Succession.** The line of succession for legal services personnel will be:
 - 1. Attorney with the office of Atlas & Hall
 - 2. Attorney with the office of the Hidalgo County Criminal District Attorney

VIII. READINESS LEVELS

- A. Readiness Level IV – Normal Conditions**
- See the prevention and preparedness activities in paragraphs V.B.1) and V.B.2) above.

B. Readiness Level III - Increased Readiness

1. The County Attorney will review the potential emergency situation, determine staff availability, and review emergency tasks assigned in the emergency management plan and this annex.
2. The County Attorney will designate the personnel on call for emergency duty.

C. Readiness Level II – High Readiness

1. Senior county officials and department heads will be briefed on the legal ramifications, if any, of the potential emergency situation.
2. The County Attorney will brief the legal staff on the potential emergency situation and plans to deal with it should it occur and ensure that on-call staff members are available by telephone and ready to report duty if called.

D. Readiness Level I – Maximum Readiness

The designated on call legal services representative will proceed to the EOC if requested.

IX. ADMINISTRATION & SUPPORT

- A. Maintenance of Records.** All records generated during an emergency will be collected and filed in an orderly manner so a record of events is preserved for use in determining response costs, settling claims, and updating emergency plans and procedures.
- B. Preservation of Records.** Vital legal records should be protected from the effects of disaster to the maximum extent feasible. Should records be damaged during an emergency situation, professional assistance in preserving and restoring those records should be obtained from a firm specializing in these tasks as soon as possible.
- C. Training.** Legal services personnel who will be participating in EOC operations shall receive training on the operating procedures for that facility.

X. ANNEX DEVELOPMENT & MAINTENANCE

- A. Development.** The County Attorney is responsible for developing and maintaining this annex.
- B. Maintenance.** This annex will be reviewed annually and updated in accordance with the schedule outlined in Section X of the Basic Plan.

XI. REFERENCES

- A. Governor's Division of Emergency Management *Local Emergency Management Planning Guide (DEM-10)*.

- B. FEMA *Guide for All-Hazard Emergency Operations Planning (SLG-101)*

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1	Sample Request for Emergency Declaration
Appendix 2	Sample Disaster Declaration
Appendix 3.....	Sample Extension of Disaster Declaration
Appendix 4.....	Sample Termination of Disaster
Appendix 5.....	Sample Emergency Powers
Appendix 6	Sample Disaster Declaration for Wildfire Threat
Appendix 7 ..	Sample Burn Ban

SAMPLE REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DECLARATION

The Honorable _____
Governor of Texas
c/o State Coordinator
Governor's Division of Emergency Management
P. O. Box 4087
Austin, Texas 78773-0001

Date:

Dear Governor _____:

The County of Hidalgo, Texas, is facing significant threats to life, health and property due to:

[Provide a description of the threat and the area or areas affected. Threats may include:

- riot or unlawful assembly of three or more persons acting together by use of force or violence
- the existence of a clear and present danger of the use of violence
- a natural or man-made disaster

(For these threats, a disaster declaration may be more appropriate.)]

The potential impact of this threat is:

[Provide an estimate of the impact on public health, safety, and property if the threat is not dealt with.]

I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that an effective response is beyond the capability of the [county/city] to control. Pursuant to §433.001 of the Texas Government Code, I am requesting that you declare a state of emergency for Hidalgo County, Texas, and issue appropriate directives to deal with the emergency; including:

[Indicate what measures that you want the Governor to take.]

Furthermore, I am asking that successive proclamations be issued and remain in effect until the threat of loss of life, injury, or damage property is contained.

A timely response to this request would be appreciated.

signature
Hidalgo County Judge

* NOTE: The statute provides that either the chief elected or the governing body of a city or county may request the Governor issue an emergency declaration. If a governing body makes a request, this letter should be appropriately modified.

SAMPLE DISASTER DECLARATION

DECLARATION OF DISASTER

WHEREAS, the County of Hidalgo on the ____ day of _____, 20__ , has suffered widespread or severe damage, injury, or loss of life or property (or there is imminent threat of same) resulting from

[Briefly describe the disaster situation.] , and

WHEREAS, the County Judge of Hidalgo County has determined that extraordinary measures must be taken to alleviate the suffering of people and to protect or rehabilitate property,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED BY THE COUNTY JUDGE HIDALGO COUNTY:

1. That a local state of disaster is hereby declared for Hidalgo County, Texas, pursuant to §418.108(a) of the Texas Government Code.

2. Pursuant to §418.018(b) of the Government Code, the state of disaster shall continue for a period of not more than seven days from the date of this declaration unless continued or renewed by the Commissioners Court of Hidalgo County, Texas.

3. Pursuant to §418.018(c) of the Government Code, this declaration of a local state of disaster shall be given prompt and general publicity and shall be filed promptly with the County Clerk.

4. Pursuant to §418.018(d) of the Government Code, this declaration of a local state of disaster activates the county emergency management plan.

5. That this proclamation shall take effect immediately from and after its issuance.

ORDERED this the ____ day of _____ , 20__ .

signature
Hidalgo County Judge

SAMPLE EXTENSION OF DISASTER DECLARATION

COMMISSIONERS COURT ORDER

WHEREAS, on [___ date ___], the County Judge issued a proclamation declaring a state of disaster for Hidalgo County, Texas, resulting from

[Provide a brief description of the disaster];

WHEREAS, the conditions necessitating declaration of a state of disaster continue to exist; and

WHEREAS, §418.108(b) of the Texas Government Code provides that a local state of disaster may not be continued for a period of excess of seven days without the consent of the governing body of the political subdivision;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDERED BY THE COMMISSIONERS COURT of Hidalgo County, Texas:

1. That the state of disaster proclaimed for the _____ by the County Judge on _____ shall continue until terminated by order of the COMMISSIONERS COURT.

2. This ordinance is passed as an emergency measure and pursuant to [local authority for emergency measures] and shall become effective on the ___ day of _____, 20____.

PASSED AND ADOPTED, this ___ day of _____, 20____.

APPROVED, this ___ day of _____, 20____.

County Judge

[Commissioners Court orders will normally include the signature of the County Judge and the County Commissioners.]

SAMPLE TERMINATION OF DISASTER

COMMISSIONERS COURT ORDER

WHEREAS, on _____, the County Judge, pursuant to the Texas Government Code, Chapter 418, (the "Texas Disaster Act"), issued a proclamation declaring a local state of disaster for the County of Hidalgo, Texas, resulting from:

[Describe the situation that occasioned the disaster declaration];

WHEREAS, the conditions necessitating the proclamation of a local state of disaster have ceased to exist; and

WHEREAS, the Texas Disaster Act provides that a local state of disaster may be terminated by the governing body of the political subdivision or by executive order of the County Judge,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDERED BY THE COMMISSIONERS COURT:

1. The Commissioners Court, as the governing body of Hidalgo County, Texas, hereby terminates the proclamation of a local state of disaster described in the preamble above.

2. A public emergency exists requiring that this ordinance be passed formally on the date of its introduction; therefore, this order shall take effect immediately upon its passage and approval by the County Judge.

PASSED AND ADOPTED, this ____ day of _____, 20__.

APPROVED, this ____ day of _____, 20__.

County Judge

[Commissioners Court orders will normally include the signature of the County Judge and the County Commissioners.]

SAMPLE EMERGENCY POWERS

COMMISSIONERS COURT ORDER

WHEREAS, by proclamation issued [date of disaster declaration], the County Judge] declared a state of disaster for Hidalgo County, Texas, resulting from

[Briefly describe the situation]; and

WHEREAS, said state of disaster requires that certain emergency measures be taken pursuant to the Executive Order of the Governor Relating to Emergency Management; now, therefore, the following regulations shall take effect immediately upon issuance, and shall remain in effect until the state of disaster is terminated:

[Eliminate sections below describing measures that will not be used.]

1. CURFEW

- (a) A person shall not remain or travel upon any public or private property in the following area(s) between the hours of _____ and _____:

[Insert description of applicable areas]

- (b) Subsection (a) shall not apply to:

- (1) a person authorized by the Emergency Management Director to assist in the production of the health, safety, or welfare of the public; or
(2) a person who remains or travels upon private property which is owned by him or upon which the person has been invited.

2. MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE AND OCCUPANCY OF PREMISES

- (a) A person shall not remain or travel upon any public or private property in the following area(s):

[Insert description of applicable areas]

- (b) Subsection (a) shall not apply to a person authorized by local government officials to assist in the protection of the health, safety, or welfare of the public.

3. UTILITIES

All utility services shall be discontinued in the following area(s):

[Insert description of applicable areas]

4. FLAMMABLE PRODUCTS

- (a) A person shall not sell or give away gasoline or other flammable or combustible products in the following area(s):

[Insert description of applicable areas]

- (b) All gasoline stations shall be closed in the following area(s):

[Insert description of applicable areas]

5. EXPLOSIVES

- (a) A person shall not sell, barter, loan, or give away arms, ammunition, dynamite, or other explosives in the following area(s):

[Insert description of applicable areas]

- (b) All establishments where arms, ammunition, dynamite, or other explosives are sold shall be closed in the following area(s):

[Insert description of applicable areas]

6. ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

- (a) A person shall not sell or distribute beer, wine, liquor, or alcoholic beverages of any kind in the following area(s):

[Insert description of applicable areas]

- (b) Subsection (a) shall not apply to the sale of medicine which contains alcohol.

7. PRICE CONTROLS

A person shall not sell any of the following goods or services for more than the price the person charged for the goods or services on (date of disaster declaration):

- (a) groceries, beverages, toilet articles, ice
- (b) construction and building materials and supplies, and earthmoving equipment and machinery
- (c) electrical and gas generating and transmission equipment, parts and accessories
- (d) charcoal briquettes, matches, candles, lamp illumination and heat unit carbides, dry batteries, light bulbs, flashlights, and hand lanterns
- (e) hand tools (manual and power), hardware and household supplies, and equipment rental
- (f) automotive parts, supplies, and accessories
- (g) plumbing and electrical tools and supplies
- (h) apartment, duplex, multi-family dwelling, rooming house, hotel and motel rental

- (i) gasoline, diesel oil, motor oil, kerosene, grease, and automotive lubricants
- (j) restaurant, cafeteria, and boarding-house meals
- (k) services of roofing and building contractors, plumbers, electricians, mechanics, tree surgeons, and automobile wrecker companies
- (l) medicine, pharmaceutical, and medical equipment and supplies
- (m) blankets, quilts, bedspreads, bed linens, mattresses, bedsprings, bedsteads, towels, and toilet paper
- (n) furniture and clothing

8. SUSPENSION AND MODIFICATION OF ORDINANCES

- (a) The following ordinances and regulations are hereby suspended or modified as indicated:

[List the relevant ordinances and regulations]

- (b) The suspension or modifications of the ordinances and regulations listed in Subsection (a) shall remain in effect until (date 60 days from the date these regulations are issued), or until the state of disaster is terminated, whichever is sooner.

9. PENALTIES

- (a) These regulations shall have the effect of ordinances when duly filed with the [County Clerk/City Secretary].
- (b) A person who violates any provision of these regulations, upon conviction, is punishable by a fine of not more than five hundred dollars (\$500.00).

10. EMERGENCY

This [ordinance/order] shall take effect immediately from and after its passage and publication, and it is accordingly so ordained.

PASSED AND ADOPTED, this ____ day of _____, 20__.

APPROVED, this ____ day of _____, 20__.

County Judge

[Commissioners Court orders will normally include the signature of the County Judge and the County Commissioners.]

SAMPLE DISASTER DECLARATION FOR WILDFIRE THREAT

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, Hidalgo County has not had rainfall for an extended period and weather forecasters offer little promise of a change in the hot, dry conditions in the near future; and

WHEREAS, these hot, dry conditions pose the threat of large, dangerous and fast-moving wildfires: and,

WHEREAS, such fires have the potential of endangering lives and damaging property on a large scale; and

WHEREAS, the Texas Disaster Act of 1975 authorized declaration of a state of disaster "if the threat of disaster is imminent" and

WHEREAS, the magnitude of the potential damage and the rapidity at which such a fire could escalate to major proportions constitute an imminent threat of disaster; and

WHEREAS, declaration of such disaster authorized the imposition of controls on activities which tend to increase the likelihood of fires; and

WHEREAS, such controls, once implemented, have the potential of protecting lives and property by mitigating the threat of dangerous fires;

BE IT THEREFORE PROCLAIMED, that I _____, County Judge of Hidalgo County, do hereby declare a state of disaster based on the threat of large wildfires in Hidalgo County, Texas; and

BE IT ALSO PROCLAIMED that this state of disaster will continue until rescinded in accordance with the above statute and order, but in no instance will this declaration continue for more than seven days without authorization by the Hidalgo County Commissioners Court;

BE IT ALSO PROCLAIMED that this state of disaster is being declared solely for the purpose of implementing controls aimed at mitigating the hazard posed by wildfires during the current hot, dry weather.

BE IT ALSO ORDERED THAT the purpose of this order is the mitigation of the hazard posed by wildfires by curtailing the practice of outdoor burning, which purpose is to be taken into account in any enforcement action based upon this order

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I affix my signature this ____ day of _____, 20____

County Judge

SAMPLE BURN BAN

COMMISSIONERS COURT ORDER
PROHIBITION OF OUTDOOR BURNING

WHEREAS, in accordance with provisions of the Texas Disaster Act of 1975, a state disaster has been based on the imminent threat of disaster from wildfire; and

WHEREAS, declaration of such disaster authorized the imposition of controls on activities which tend to increase the likelihood of such fires:

BE IT THEREFORE ORDERED that the following emergency regulations are hereby established for all unincorporated areas of Hidalgo County, Texas for the duration of the above mentioned declaration;

1. Actions Prohibited:

 A person violates this order if he or she burns any combustible material outside of an enclosure serving to contain all flames and/or sparks, or orders such burning by others.

2. Enforcement:

 A. Upon notification of suspected outdoor burning, the fire department assigned to the location of the fire shall respond to the scene and take immediate measures to contain and/or extinguish the fire.

 B. As soon as possible, a duly commissioned peace officer shall be sent to the scene to investigate the nature of the fire.

 C. If in the opinion of the officer at the scene and/or the fire chief, the goal of the order can be attained by informing the responsible party about the prohibitions established by this order, the officer may, at his discretion, notify the party about the provisions of this order and request compliance with it. In such instances, an entry of the notification shall be made into the dispatchers log containing the time, date, and place of the warning, and the name of the person receiving the warning.

3. At the discretion of the peace officer or the fire chief, second or flagrant violations of this order may be prosecuted in accordance with the statutes and procedures governing misdemeanors.

BE IT ALSO ORDERED that this order may be enforced by any duly-commissioned peace officer and that the venue for prosecution of this order will be the Justice of the Peace.

APPROVED, this ____ day of _____, 20__.

County Judge

[Commissioners Court orders will normally include the signature of the County Judge and the County Commissioners.]