

**Memorandum of Understanding**

**Between**

**County of Hidalgo, TX**

**and**

**The American Red Cross**

## I. Purpose

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") is to define a working relationship between The American Red Cross (hereinafter "Red Cross") and County of Hidalgo, TX, its lead Emergency Management agency (hereinafter Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management), and other departments, agencies, and offices in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies and disasters. This MOU provides the broad framework for cooperation and support between the Red Cross and the Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management in:

- Assisting individuals and families who have been impacted by a disaster or an emergency and providing other humanitarian services.
- Readiness and response activities, including planning, training, exercising, and resourcing.
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities of Red Cross, and the County of Hidalgo, to the community and other Agencies during each phase of emergencies.

## II. Parties

### A. County of Hidalgo

The County of Hidalgo is located at 302 W. University, Edinburg Texas near the Gulf Coast. Known demographics and risk data can be summarized as including the following:

#### 1. Census data (2013)

Total Population:	815,996
% under 5 years:	9.7% (79,152)
% under 18 years:	34% (277,439)
% 65+ years:	10% (81,600)
Ethnicities (and % of population)	Hispanic/Latino 91% Non-Hispanic or Latino 7.3%
Religions (and % of population)	Catholic 77%, Evangelical Denomination 15%, Protestant Denomination 5.6%, Other 2.4% <small>(Population Statistics based on population of 569,463 stated on county profile City-Data.com)</small>
Specific known vulnerable populations or areas:	San Carlos, Delta Area, Hall Acres and Hoen Subdivision

Historical incidents of significance:	Hurricane Dolly, Hurricane Alex
Most likely high risk scenario affecting residential communities:	Flooding, Wind damages

2. Legal Authority for Local Government:

Texas State law sets the responsibility for emergency management at the local level.

Texas Government Code Chapter 418 – Provides authority and mechanisms to clarify and strengthen key roles, as well as authorize and provide for cooperation and coordination of an emergency management system embodying all aspects of pre-disaster preparedness and post-disaster response.

Texas Government Code Chapter §418.043– Authorizes the Texas Department of Emergency Management to adopt standards and requirements for local and interjurisdictional emergency management plans.

Texas Administrative Code Title 37, part 1, Chapter 7, Subchapter B, Rule §7.12 – Specifies requirements for local and interjurisdictional emergency management.

**B. American Red Cross**

1. Services for people affected by disasters

Founded in 1881, the American Red Cross is the nation's premier emergency response organization. As part of a worldwide movement that offers neutral and impartial humanitarian care, the Red Cross is the community-based organization that mobilizes people to aid victims of disasters with the aim of preventing and relieving suffering. The Red Cross provides disaster services without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, citizenship or veteran status. It follows the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and as the sole US member to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), ensures the IFRC Code of Conduct is followed whenever possible by individuals, teams, partners and agents of the Red Cross (See Attachment 1).

The Red Cross is closely integrated into community response efforts, including the efforts of federal, state and local government and non-government organizations. Our goal is to work with all partners to lead a well-integrated, effective and efficient response to every disaster.

The Red Cross provides disaster services pursuant to its Bylaws and other internal policies and procedures as well as its Congressional Charter (USC 36 §300101-300111). In the Charter, Congress authorized the Red Cross "to carry out a system of national and international relief in time of peace, and apply that system in mitigating the suffering caused by pestilence, famine,

fire, floods, and other great national calamities, and to devise and carry out measures for preventing those calamities."

The American Red Cross is a co-lead for the mass care component of Emergency Support Function #6 of the National Response Framework, and is a support agency for emergency assistance, housing, and human services. In this role, the Red Cross engages in a variety of activities to support the state of Texas, and local jurisdictions in planning, coordinating and executing mass care programs and strategies. The Red Cross also takes a leadership role in working with other non-governmental organizations and private companies that provide services during a disaster.

## 2. Organization

The American Red Cross is a single corporation, headquartered in Washington, D.C. Each multi-state division and multi-county region has certain authority and responsibility for carrying out Red Cross disaster preparedness, response and recovery activities, delivering local Red Cross services, and meeting corporate obligations within the territorial jurisdiction assigned to it. Each region is familiar with the hazards of the locality and maintains assessments of available personnel, equipment, supplies, and other resources for disaster relief. The region also formulates cooperative plans and procedures with local government agencies and private organizations for relief activities should a disaster occur.

Through its nationwide organization, the Red Cross coordinates its total resources for use in large disasters. In order to provide these services, the Red Cross may call on the Federal, state or local government for assistance when voluntary contributions are not sufficient to meet community needs.

### **III. Cooperative Actions**

The Red Cross recognizes the authority assigned to the local county judge and local city mayors in Texas State law and will engage in no action related to disaster response without first sharing operating plans, priorities and objectives with the delegated emergency management staff of the local jurisdiction as previously agreed upon (See Attachment 3: Points of Contact).

The Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management recognizes the national level roles and responsibilities designated to the American Red Cross in the October 22, 2010 Memorandum of Agreement between FEMA and Red Cross.

*The Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management recognizes the Red Cross as having mass care responsibility in domestic disasters and when activated, authorizes and will support and coordinate with the Red Cross in the execution of these duties.*

The Red Cross and the Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management will coordinate their respective disaster relief activities to maximize services to the community and avoid duplication of efforts. Both parties agree to:

1. Coordinate mutual activation of no-notice events (such as local fires) through the

established 24 hour notification point of contact (See Attachment 3: Points of Contact). Develop joint Standard Operating Procedures for ongoing communications including use of WebEOC, radio communications, and other emergency coordination protocols.

2. Maintain close coordination, liaison activities, and support at all levels with conferences, meetings, and other means of communication. Include a representative of the other party in appropriate committees, planning groups and task forces formed to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters and other emergencies.
3. Keep each other informed of the human needs created by the events and the services they are providing during disasters and emergencies. Share current data regarding disasters, to include risk and hazard impact analysis, statistical information, historical information, emerging needs and trends, damage assessments, formal declarations, and service delivery priorities.
4. Work together to develop plans, revise planning annexes, and identify resources to facilitate delivery of services to people with disabilities and/or functional and access needs during a disaster.

Plan Annexes that reference the Red Cross include:	Annex C- Shelter & Mass Care
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5. Actively participate in reviewing and carrying out responsibilities outlined in the local emergency operations plans.
6. Both parties will ensure, to the fullest extent possible, that disaster relief operations within the Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management will be as accessible as possible to people with disabilities and other access and functional needs, based on the American with Disabilities Act and related federal, state and local laws.
7. Prior to and during the time of disaster, keep the public informed of cooperative efforts through the public information offices of the Red Cross and the Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management.
8. The Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management recognizes that the Red Cross is dependent upon voluntary public financial donations. In accordance with applicable laws and regulations, the Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management will support the Red Cross in locating and acquiring necessary resources in an emergency including a response to formal resource requests. Both parties will work together, as appropriate, to identify local sourcing solutions that expand disaster capabilities and enhance community resilience.
9. Use or display the name, emblem, or trademarks of the American Red Cross or the Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management only in the case of defined projects or pre-authorized emergency operations and only with the prior express written consent of

the other organization.

10. The American Red Cross will support the Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management in integrating the efforts of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) that provide mass care services during response operations.

#### **IV. Periodic Review**

The parties will, on an annual basis, on or around the anniversary date of this MOU, jointly evaluate their progress in implementing this MOU and revise and develop new plans, attachments or goals as appropriate.

#### **V. Term and Termination.**

This MOU is effective as of April 28, 2015. It expires on April 28, 2020. Six months prior to expiration, the parties will meet to review the progress and success of the cooperative effort. In connection with such review, the parties may decide to extend this MOU for an additional period not exceeding five years, and if so shall confirm this in a signed writing. This MOU may be terminated by written notification from either party to the other at any time and for any or no reason.

#### **VI. Miscellaneous**

This MOU does not create a partnership, a joint power agreement, or a joint venture and does not create any financial commitments from one party to the other. Neither party has the authority to bind the other to any obligation. It is not intended that this MOU be enforceable as a matter of law in any court or dispute resolution forum. The sole remedy for non-performance under this MOU shall be termination, with no damages or penalty.

Signature page follows.

Signature Page

County of Hidalgo

The American Red Cross

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Name: Ramon Garcia

Title: Hidalgo County Judge

Date \_\_\_\_\_

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Name: Janet Martinez

Title: Disaster Program Manager

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Attachment 1:

## I. The Seven Fundamental Principles

Proclaimed in Vienna in 1965, the seven Fundamental Principles bond together the Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. They guarantee the continuity of the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement and its humanitarian work.

### A. Humanity

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The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavors, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

### B. Impartiality

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It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavors to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

### C. Neutrality

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In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

### D. Independence

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The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

### E. Voluntary service

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It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

### F. Unity

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There can be only one Red Cross or one Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

### G. Universality

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The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.

## II. Code of conduct

The Code of Conduct for The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief, was developed and agreed upon by eight of the world's largest disaster response agencies in the summer of 1994.

The Code of Conduct, like most professional codes, is a voluntary one. It lays down ten points of principle which all humanitarian actors should adhere to in their disaster response work, and goes on to describe the relationships that agencies working in disasters should seek with donor governments, host governments and the UN system.

The code is self-policing. There is as yet no international association for disaster-response NGOs which possesses any authority to sanction its members. The Code of Conduct continues to be used by the International Federation to monitor its own standards of relief delivery and to encourage other agencies to set similar standards.

It is hoped that humanitarian actors around the world will commit themselves publicly to the code by becoming a signatory and by abiding by its principles. Governments and donor organizations may want to use the code as a yardstick against which to measure the conduct of those agencies with which they work. Disaster-affected communities have a right to expect that those who assist them measure up to these standards.

### **Principles of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Response Programs**

1. The humanitarian imperative comes first.
2. Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone.
3. Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint.
4. We shall endeavor not to act as instruments of government policy.
5. We shall respect culture and custom.
6. We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities.
7. Ways shall be found to involve program beneficiaries in the management of relief aid.
8. Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs.
9. We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources.
10. In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognize disaster victims as dignified human beings, not hopeless objects.

Attachment 2:

## Red Cross Services

Following a disaster, whether natural or human-made, the Red Cross will provide some or all of the following services:

### *Mass Care Services - Food, Shelter, Emergency Supplies, and Welfare Information*

During a disaster, our first priority is to ensure that people have a safe place to stay, food, and emergency supplies.

1. Upon request by Incident Command or local Emergency Management, Red Cross will open, manage and operate an emergency shelter to meet the basic needs of people displaced by an emergency or disaster. Red Cross will coordinate with emergency management for all Mass Care operations.
2. Red Cross will notify Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management of any situation where a large number of people are displaced from a disaster or emergency. The decision to open a shelter will be made in consultation with the Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management as required and as resources permit.
3. Red Cross maintains its own Logistics section at the DRO Headquarters, and supplies and staffs all shelters operating under the Red Cross Code of Conduct (see Attachment 4) with cots, blankets, comfort and sanitation items, basic medical supplies if available, full meal service twice a day, and other essential items as needed.
  - a. A typical shelter team includes a Shelter Manager, several trained shelter support staff, Health and Mental Health, Public Affairs, and a Community Liaison.
  - b. Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management assigned personnel may be available upon request if Attachment 4 has been executed.
  - c. Whenever possible and if feasible, Red Cross will notify the Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management of any critical staffing or supply shortfalls including and especially supplies, equipment and trained personnel necessary to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities and other functional needs.
4. Red Cross will not prevent the County of Hidalgo workers from supporting, inspecting, or otherwise ensuring public health and safety of operations in the County of Hidalgo.  
**NOTE: Public Safety officers engaged in general searches will not be permitted.**
5. The Red Cross works with partner organizations including other non-profits, community vendors and multi-state distributors to provide hot food service when and if feasible to support the needs of the community.
6. The Red Cross mobilizes emergency response vehicles to provide mobile points of distribution from which disaster workers distribute food, water, and essential clean-up items that might not be available in the community.
  - a. When a facility based Point of Distribution is needed to support the community, Red Cross will work with local government to ensure commodity distribution is coordinated, and high risk populations, such as people with disabilities who have difficulty getting to such locations, have access to essential resources.

7. Disasters often disrupt regular communication channels and can separate families. Through the Red Cross' nationwide network, family members may request welfare information regarding their loved ones. The Red Cross "Safe and Well" Web site enables people within a disaster area to let their families and friends outside of the affected region know that they are all right. Clients register on *Safe and Well* at [www.redcross.org/safeandwell](http://www.redcross.org/safeandwell) . During large-scale disasters, individuals without internet access can call 1-800-RED-CROSS to register or may be provided a paper form that will later be transcribed into the national database.

#### *Community Preparedness and Resilience*

The Red Cross Preparedness and Resilience efforts seek to promote public awareness of risk and preparedness activities. Our programs encourage community members or organizations to limit the impact of a future disaster and help people and communities bounce back faster and more fully, and to foster the social norming or acceptance of preparedness in our culture. These programs range from simple preparedness presentations for adults and children to home fire prevention and smoke alarm installations.

#### *Client Casework and Recovery Planning and Assistance*

Red Cross provides individual client services through casework to people with disaster-related needs, with particular attention to those who have experienced significant damage or loss of their homes. This casework process helps the worker to assess the client's immediate needs, and connect the client with resources, which may include referrals to local agencies and/or financial assistance to meet those needs. The caseworker also engages the client in a brief planning process which can help identify action steps for the client to follow in the first few days or weeks after a disaster. Red Cross caseworkers protect client confidentiality and work closely with other organizations and groups to ensure clients have access to all available resources.

1. When necessary and as resources are made available from multiple organizations, Red Cross will coordinate the opening of a Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC) to facilitate expedited client case management and multi-agency coordination.
2. Red Cross casework is available for all disaster victims including those of single family fires that occur daily throughout the County of Hidalgo. Red Cross casework local response begins with the Disaster Action Team, a 24-7-365 program of on-call local volunteers willing to respond to the scene of home fires to initiate casework services.

#### *Disaster Health and Mental Health Services*

After an emergency, injuries can ensue, essential prescription medicines lost, and the shock and stress of sudden loss can overwhelm a person's normal coping skills. The Red Cross deploys licensed health and mental health professionals who are trained and equipped to provide assistance at the time of a disaster. Disaster health services professionals can provide emergency first aid and medical assessment, triage and replacement of emergency medications with item distribution, financial assistance or referrals to community partners. Disaster mental health professionals provide mental health assessments, crisis intervention and a sympathetic ear to those in need.

#### *Liaison and Communications*

During a disaster or emergency situation the Red Cross will, at the request of the Hidalgo County

Office of Emergency Management, provide liaison personnel to the local Emergency Operations Center and any corresponding command posts, information centers, or other entities under the authority of the Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management.

1. The American Red Cross tracks shelter location and population information in the National Shelter System (NSS) and will coordinate shelter information sharing and reporting with the Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management through the assigned liaison.
2. The Red Cross will encourage and require liaisons to complete necessary ICS based training and exercise participation with local government as feasible.

#### *Planning and Readiness efforts*

In an effort to provide more sophisticated, relevant, and clear disaster operations plans, the Red Cross maintains a Disaster Response Plan as part of the region's planning portfolio. There are also a number of high risk-planning scenarios used to measure capacity and facilitate realistic planning efforts.

1. Red Cross will, as appropriate, at the request of the Hidalgo County Office of Emergency Management, assist County planners in mass care preparedness, planning and response coordination with Red Cross and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
2. Both parties will jointly review plans and procedures that standardize recurring tasks and responsibilities where Red Cross is identified in the local Emergency Operation Plan as a lead or support agency.
3. Red Cross will freely share internal plans, lists, procedures, and annual priorities with local government entities as requested.

Attachment 3:

Points of contact

Local Government

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Email</b>
Judge/Mayor	Ramon Garcia	956-383-7441	ramon.garcia@co.hidalgo.tx.us
Emergency Management Coordinator	Ricardo Saldana	956-289-6549	ricardo.saldana@co.hidalgo.tx.us
24 hr emergency contact	Ricardo Saldana	956-289-6549	ricardo.saldana@co.hidalgo.tx.us

American Red Cross

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Email</b>
Executive Director	Iris Juergens	956-607-1040	iris.juergens@redcross.org
Disaster Program Manager	Janet Martinez	956-357-7600	janet.martinez@redcross.org
Disaster Program Specialist	Darrel Mixon	956-444-2519	darrell.mixon@redcross.org
Senior Disaster Program Manager	Lina Romero	956-607-4100	lina.mendezromero@redcross.org
Regional Disaster Officer			
24 hr hotline		866-526-8300	

