

## Mary Clark

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**From:** Lisa Birkman  
**Sent:** Friday, December 28, 2012 2:46 PM  
**To:** Mary Clark  
**Subject:** Fwd: Apartment Fire Situational Update

Lisa Birkman  
Williamson County Commissioner, Pct. One

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Jarred Thomas <[JThomas@wilco.org](mailto:JThomas@wilco.org)>  
**Date:** December 20, 2012 9:11:25 PM CST  
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**Subject:** Apartment Fire Situational Update

To All:

Today started with the chaos of the mass evacuation of the International Residence apartment complex in Jollyville and a lesser evacuation south of Hutto secondary to a wildland fire. Through the rapid actions and coordination of fire, law enforcement, and emergency communications staff, resources responded and without hesitation began the evacuations. Residents of the apartments were advised to immediately evacuate providing no time to grab valuables, medicine, and in most cases even their identification. As a result of the fire and strong winds the fire spread rapidly and destroyed 3 buildings containing a total of 68 units, all but 3 were occupied. Residents evacuated the complex amidst thick smoke unable to see the degree of potential destruction.

With assistance from the Red Cross, Austin Disaster Relief Network, Williamson County Regional Animal Shelter, and numerous Animal Control Officers, a Red Cross Shelter and Disaster Assistance Center were established in the Northwest Fellowship Church. Through the collaboration and cooperation of multiple local, state, and federal agencies along with multiple Non-Government Organizations (NGO) and the apartment management, held a joint informational briefing to the displaced residents following lunch. Our actions during that briefing, in my opinion and the opinions of bystanders, provided the residents with much needed information in a manner that was both compassionate yet very direct. As each of the speakers that participated in the briefing spoke, residents

were provided with more and more information and clear direction of the events that would follow. Residents were initially provided the opportunity to return to the site to view the devastation firsthand, hopefully beginning or providing some closure for the days uncertainty. By the time we held our second briefing this evening the attendees had more than doubled. Again the speakers presented a message that was clear yet compassionate and although times like these can sometimes bring out the worst in us, the entire group was attentive, cooperative, and receptive to information and directions provided.

I have been a part of many similar incidents and I have to say that I have not yet witnessed the overwhelming level of response and support from not only the public safety agencies but of the entire community. Disaster response and recovery does not start nor end with state or federal support, it starts at home. Although, many of these families have lost almost everything and they may have a long road to recovery, they are more likely to succeed living in a community that cares about its neighbors.

I would like to thank Commissioner Birkman for riding with me today. Her presence on scene did not go unnoticed and brought added confidence to the response. There is a list of agencies and/or individuals that I did not list in this email that certainly deserve recognition and I will try and get a complete list of agencies, NGOs, faith based groups, and private businesses that made today's events a little less tragic. Thanks for all your support.

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