

Fort Bend

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Herald

Mock hurricane drill takes on new meaning for emergency department

By Stephen Palkot

Hurricane season begins in June, and a drill to be conducted by the Fort Bend County Emergency Management Office will test the readiness of county and city governments.

An exercise to be conducted

from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday he said. Each year, the Fort Bend County Emergency Management Office conducts a large, multi-agency hurricane preparedness drill. This year's drill comes months after the county received two unexpected hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The drill is a continuation of 2005's "Hurricane Harley" drill, which focused on how county departments would react to an approaching storm in the Gulf Coast, said Emergency Management Coordinator Jeff Braun. This year's drill will focus on recovery efforts and debris management just after a storm passes through Fort Bend County.

"Right where we stopped last year is where we're going to start," Braun said. "The shift change will present its own set of challenges, as workers from one shift will need to convey information to their replacements. Unlike previous drills, this week's will involve field work with equipment being dispatched to various locations. Specifically, the drill will test the abilities of area public works departments to handle debris management, which includes gathering material such as tree limbs and depositing them at a central location."

Emergency Management Assistant Coordinator Danny Jauff said committees have planned the scenarios to be faced by participants. Braun said the drill is a See DRILL, page

DRILL: Hurricane prep

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"We've already got plotted where tornadoes are going to hit. We've already got it all mapped out. We know what houses have been damaged. We're going to actually have to deploy damage assessment teams, actually going out into the streets," he said.

This will be the first test of a newly-devised county-wide debris management plan. Included in the drill will be a

mock press conference at 2 p.m., and an after-action review at 4 p.m., where participants are invited to share their comments.

"We'll figure out what we need to learn, what we need to continue to work on and what we can fix real quickly," he said.

Braun said that experts are predicting a busy hurricane season, similar to 2005.

"The drill we did last April was very helpful to us when the real events later in the summer came to fruition," he said.