

# County applies Scouting motto: 'Be prepared'

■ Fort Bend hires  
firm to help  
remove debris  
after a disaster

By **ROBERT STANTON**  
HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Fort Bend County officials are talking trash — at least how to get rid of it after major storms.

With the help of Fairfax, Va.-based consulting firm Dewberry & Davis, the county plans to develop a debris-management plan that includes cities within the county.

One of the goals, county officials say, is to arrange "pre-position contracts" with debris-removal firms that would step in to help when there's more debris than county crews and equipment are able to handle.

In a "pre-position" contract, the county would select a firm to use in the case of a storm or major disaster.

"The time to figure out how you're going to handle debris is not after the emergency... it's before the emergency, and that's what we're doing," County Judge Bob Hebert said. "This is a big step in the right direction."

In 2002, the county approved a contract with Dewberry & Davis to assess the county's debris-management preparedness. On Nov. 23, commissioners modified the contract to include area municipalities in the debris-cleanup plans, Hebert said.

With more than 1,600 employees and more than \$189 million in contracts nationwide, D&D has a track record in disaster preparedness.

The firm helped with debris

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—**BOB HEBERT**  
Fort Bend County judge

removal at the World Trade Center after the 9/11 disaster and assisted Florida officials in cleanup plans in the aftermath of the state's record four hurricanes this year, said Jeff Braun, the county's emergency management coordinator.

The firm will be called on to help develop a comprehensive plan for the county, everything from locating temporary debris staging areas, to predicting how much debris a given incident may generate and arranging training for city and county personnel.

"We're all working together on the same page, and that's the beauty of this project," Braun said of working with area city officials. "By working together, we'll be a lot more effective with a debris-management plan."

The effort would include input from city officials in Sugar Land, Missouri City, Stafford, Rosenberg and Richmond, as well as from other smaller municipalities, Braun said.

City and county officials plan to meet with D&D con-

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sultants in January, and hopefully have a plan in place by April 2005 — "definitely by the start of the hurricane season," Braun said.

Commissioner James Patterson said it's important to select cleanup firms that would agree to haul debris at a set price.

"What we want is a (contract) version that says there's

no negotiations... it's a done deal," Patterson said.

If a major disaster were to hit Fort Bend, the county would apply to the Federal Emergency Management Agency for reimbursement of cleanup costs, Braun said. If approved, the county would receive 75 percent of the total costs, he said.

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