

Next Generation 9-1-1

NEW DIGITAL PLATFORM REPLACES ANALOG SYSTEM

- Instant messaging.
- Text messaging.
- Video messaging.

If you are not yet using one of these digital methods of communication, you are sure to be in the near future. Because our means of communicating is rapidly moving to a digital system that incorporates a wide range of personal communications devices, the Panhandle Regional 9-1-1 Network is undertaking one of the most challenging projects it has encountered to date. The Network is converting the region from its old analog equipment and network to a new Internet Protocol (IP) digital environment. Such a conversion is required to accommodate the various and diverse ways people communicate today.

"The 9-1-1 infrastructure across the nation is more than 40 years old," explained Greg Green, Director of the PRPC's Regional 9-1-1 Network Program. "While it is still working well today, it is approaching the end of its useful life. These current systems could be described as 'analog technology in an overwhelmingly digital world'.

"As we begin the process of implementation of this new equipment, our goal is 'Emergency help, any time – any where – any device'. To do this, we first must provide the digital platform capable of routing emergency data (voice, text, images, and video) over a private network that ensures reliability and security of the data."

The old analog system that Green describes was put in place to support copper wire, home-based, analog telephones. Over



the years, as technologies have changed, a number of workarounds, back-room re-engineering and other 'band-aid' solutions have been applied so that wireless and Voice-over-Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone calls could be delivered. While still functional, the Panhandle's current analog equipment is among the oldest 9-1-1 equipment still being used in the state of Texas.

Preparing for what is being called Next Generation 9-1-1 or NG9-1-1, the new call-taking equipment (CPE) that has been purchased for all 23 call

centers in the region is able to support existing levels of service as well as future text and video once the telecom industry is ready to provide the data to 9-1-1. "The PRPC was fortunate enough to be allocated money by the Commission on State Emergency Communications (CSEC) to purchase NG-capable equipment," said Green. "Our staff has been engaged for over

(Continued on page 9)

Statewide Leaders

Robert's County Judge Vernon Cook and Amarillo Mayor Debra McCartt both serve on the PRPC Board of Directors. They also have something else in common. Mayor McCartt is the current President of the Texas Municipal League while Judge Cook serves as the President of the Texas Association of Counties. It's highly unusual to have both presidents from the same region of the state serving simultaneously, and is a reflection of the excellent local government leadership which we enjoy in the Texas Panhandle.



Meet the Board Chair



Zelda Lang, PRPC Board Chair, Councilwoman, City of Dalhart

"If you love your job, it makes getting up and going to work exciting." This phrase describes how Zelda Lang has approached life for the past 72 years. Whether being married, being a mother, doing volunteer work, being a newspaper editor, being a radio news reporter, or serving on the PRPC Board, Zelda loves life.

Except for one year in El Paso, Texas, where her late husband Bob served in the military, Zelda has spent her entire life in Dalhart. Both her parents worked at the Dalhart Texan daily newspaper, where her father served as Editor from 1936 to 1980, and her mother was City Editor. While they were at work, Zelda's grandmother, who lived with the family, raised her and her older sister.

Following high school, she attended Draughns Business College to obtain some business training, a recommendation her father made. The newspaper business was 'in her blood'. Armed with business training, she became a file clerk at the Dalhart Texan newspaper. She worked her way up the career ladder, finally becoming Editor in 1982. Zelda's husband also worked at the newspaper. At one point, they owned one-third of the business.

Zelda worked there until 2005.

"I loved working at the paper. Everything about the job was a challenge. I covered school board and city council meetings, car wrecks, obituaries, and, of course, the annual XIT Ranch celebration. I liked the variety, and always knew what was going on in town." Zelda remembers two of her best stories: one about whether a prison should be built in town; the other about a controversy over a coach. "My job was to point out the pros and the cons and let the readers form their own opinions."

One day short of a month after leaving the newspaper, she went to work for KXIT radio. She attends the same meetings she attended as a newspaper reporter, except now she records her stories to air on the radio. Zelda has been a radio reporter for the station since 2005.

Not one to be idle, in 1998 Zelda decided to run for City Council in Dalhart. She has held a Council seat since that time, winning elections every two years for the past 12 years. In May of this year, she is up for re-election. So far she has no opponent. Zelda is proud of her small community of 7,000. "We are fortunate here. Our government runs very smoothly, our residents are interested in improving the city, and with the dairies moving in, the economic outlook is on a positive note."

It was as a City Council member that Zelda was introduced to the Planning Commission. "Working with the PRPC staff and other Board members has been a wonderful experience. I can't say enough about the professionalism and knowledge of the PRPC staff. Under Gary's direction, they are a wonderful resource for the Panhandle."

Zelda has also enjoyed working with her fellow Board members. "By sharing our unique experiences with one another, we learn of new solutions that we may not have thought of by

ourselves. We are all living in the Panhandle and only want the best for this region."

When asked about the topics or issues she and the Board are most passionate about, she says "they're all important." "From water planning, to 9-1-1 upgrades, to homeland security, to restoring our courthouses, to taking care of the elderly," Zelda says, "the PRPC addresses each one as if it is the only item we face. We tackle them all with the same concern and energy."

When Zelda is not at a City Council meeting, PRPC Board meeting, church, the radio station, visiting her three children who also live in Dalhart, you can probably find her playing bridge or dominoes with her friends, or reading at her kitchen table. "I love mysteries," she laughs. "I'm reading Cold Room now, and it is quite frightening."

Zelda recommends that each individual finds some way to give back to the community. "Whether it's serving on a board, delivering meals to the elderly, or just donating food or clothing to those in need, the benefits of getting involved are so gratifying. You'll enjoy every minute you spend." ✚

Trails Newsletter
To provide comments,
make address changes
or request additional
copies, write or call the
PRPC office, 806-372-3381.

www.theprpc.org

Gary Pitner,
Executive Director

Rebecca Rusk,
Newsletter Coordinator



Terrie Campbell

AAA adds new counselor

Terrie Campbell has recently joined the Area Agency on Aging as Benefits Counselor. Most recently, Campbell served as the Community Service Representative and Office Manager for Home Instead Senior Care. She holds an Associate Degree in Science (with a social work emphasis) from Amarillo College.

Fair Housing Month

The PRPC Board of Directors declared March 2010 Fair Housing Month in the Panhandle. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, as amended, prohibits discrimination in housing and declared it a national policy to provide, within constitutional limits, fair housing in the U.S. ♣



Pam Coffey

Mediator of the Year

In a surprise vote by the Dispute Resolution Center's (DRC) Board, **Pam Coffey**, the Director for the Center, was named Mediator of the Year. Pam is the second Director of the DRC, which was founded in 1989. She has led the Center since 1993.

Born in Perryton, Texas, Pam holds a Bachelor's Degree in Communications from Texas A&M University and a Masters Degree in Political Science from West Texas A&M University. Pam has

always believed in the philosophy of mediating vs. litigation. "It has been my experience that when two parties can sit across the table from one another and discuss the real issues that are between them, a workable solution can be achieved. Mediation is a simpler, less expensive path to take for solving disputes than going to court."

Since 1989, the DRC has handled more than 6,500 cases, mostly in the family law arena. More than 70 percent of these cases have reached a settlement. The DRC now has about 35 trained volunteer mediators in place. First serving the Amarillo area only, now the DRC offers mediation services throughout the entire Texas Panhandle.

"I'm certainly honored by this recognition my Board bestowed on me," she said. "But I'm also humbled, as every one of these volunteer mediators is more deserving. They donate their time and expertise to help individuals and families. They also are helping keep our court system from being overburdened, leaving the courts to deal with the tougher criminal cases." ♣

PRPC staff members earn service awards

Six PRPC employees were recognized with service awards at the PRPC Annual Meeting last fall. Twenty-year recipients include **Pam Zenick**, Workforce Development Planning Manager; and **Sharee Bailey**, Administrative Program Specialist. Fifteen-year awards went to **Cristy Henderson**, Accounting Manager; and **Cindy Boone**, CPA, Finance Director. **Tony White**, Workforce Development Assistant Director, was recognized for 10 years of service. **Dave Cann**, Emergency Communications Program Manager, received an award for five years of service. ♣

Website improved

Visit our website – www.theprpc.org – to see the improvements that have been made, as well as new links that have been added. Check out the Closed Landfill Inventory link under Solid Waste,

or the new program page for Emergency Preparedness. Have a question of a staff member? Click on the name of the PRPC staff member, and an email window pops up for your convenience.



Jon Sessions



Joel Richardson

Two public servants honored

Two special awards were given at the PRPC Annual Meeting in recognition of public service. The Beelee Goodwin Regional Public Administrator Award, which honors an individual who has made a significant contribution to the region as a public servant, was awarded to **Jon Sessions**, Wellington City Manager. Born and raised in Wellington, Sessions has served as City Manager for 17 years. With limited resources, he has led his city in building recreational facilities, providing for local healthcare needs, and maintaining a high-quality public infrastructure. He has served in numerous capacities for the Planning Commission.

Recognizing an individual for efforts which have contributed to the advancement, growth, and development of the 26-county Texas Panhandle region, the Regional Service Award was awarded to **Joel Richardson**, Randall County Sheriff. Dedicated to the profession of law enforcement, Richardson was the valedictorian of the 13th class of the Panhandle Regional Law Enforcement Training Academy in 1975. Beginning his career as a patrolman with the West Texas State University Police Department, Richardson joined the Randall County Sheriff's Office as a Deputy in 1976. After several promotions, he was elected Randall County Sheriff in 2000. He was re-elected to that position in 2004 and again in 2008. ♣

"We...cut our program costs...and improved the quality of our services..."

Panhandle Workforce Board recognized for exemplary performance



Dallam County Judge David Field; Pam Zenick of PRPC; and Trent Morris and the staff from Workforce Solutions attended the 13th Annual Texas Workforce Conference, where they received the exemplary performance award for the fifth consecutive year.

For the fifth year in a row, the Panhandle Workforce Development Board has received a major performance award. The group was recognized at the 13th Annual Texas Workforce Conference held in Grapevine, Texas, during November for making the greatest reduction in the amount of child care grant funds used for Administration and Operating Costs.

The group was competing with several other workforce boards for recognition. Awards presented at the conference recognized those boards displaying increased accountability and improved efficiencies in dealing with program funds during the year.

"We took some steps last year that dramatically cut our program costs and improved the quality of our services at the same time," said Tom Dressler, PRPC Workforce Development Director. "We closed one facility which was used solely for child care staff and services. The individuals who worked there are now integrated with the personnel in our other Workforce Solutions offices around the region. We also automated payments to child care vendors through a bankcard system. The savings that resulted from these steps were then applied to providing more clients with child care services."

The Board received a check for \$50,000 for its efforts. The funds will be used to further improve local programs. ♣

Pitner named Globe News 2009 Man of the Year

Words such as positive, strong work ethic, passionate, and dedicated help explain why Gary Pitner, Executive Director for the PRPC, was selected as the Amarillo Globe News 2009 Man of the Year. The honor is well deserved for the 53-year-old Amarillo resident who wears many hats both personally and professionally.

Pitner has a long list of accomplishments, but prefers to avoid the limelight. He is a husband, a father, active in his church, involved with numerous community organizations, and leader to more than 45 employees at the PRPC. He has been with the PRPC since 1977, when he first served as an intern from West Texas State University.

Deaf Smith County Judge Tom Simons calls him "The best bureaucrat I've ever known. And I mean that kindly," he said. "There's so much criticism when things are done through government, but Gary knows exactly how to work with legislators and whoever else. He knows how to do things and not offend anybody."

Long-time friend Wes Reeves says when you work with him, you will hear the word 'community' often. "He means it as a community of people. Everything he does is geared toward the greater good." ♣



Gary Pitner, Executive Director of the PRPC.

...the information is used to develop national strategies for protecting resources.

Regional Critical Infrastructure and Key Resources Data Call is under way

by John Kiehl,

PRPC Regional Services Director

Nearly every segment of society relies on some form of infrastructure or key resource in order to function properly. As society has advanced, the relationships and interdependencies between the different types of infrastructure and resources on which it depends have grown in complexity and become more intertwined. Disruptions or shortages at critical points can often result in dire consequences and cascading effects. A good example of this is with the rolling black-out that occurred in the Northeast several years ago. Overloads at critical points in the electrical grid not only resulted in a loss of power where the disruptions occurred, they essentially took down a system that served a multi-state region, leaving the entire area without power until the necessary repairs could be made. Metaphorically speaking, our critical infrastructure and key resources are the Achilles heel of our society.

Each year, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issues a data call asking jurisdictions around the nation to provide information to the agency regarding the types of critical infrastructure and key resources (CI/KR) existing in their area. This annual data call is important because the information is used to develop national strategies for protecting common types of infrastructure/resources. In some cases, the information is also used as the basis of DHS funding decisions. The data call is done in conjunction with the federal Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) program.

The CIP was first established in 1998 by President Clinton under Presidential Directive 63. The program was further refined in December 2003 by President Bush through Homeland Security Presidential Directive 7 (HSPD-7) for

Critical Infrastructure Identification, Prioritization, and Protection. HSPD-7 broadened the definition of critical infrastructure in accordance with the Patriot Act, as the physical and virtual systems that are 'so vital to the United States that the incapacity or destruction of such systems and assets would have a debilitating impact on security, national economic security, national public health or safety.'

The Panhandle region is home to a number of facilities, resources and systems that could fit HSPD-7's definition of criticality. Some of these have been identified by DHS in previous years, through the data call, and a few of those have even received funding assistance through the Buffer Zone Protection Program to reduce the vulnerabilities to their critical points of failure.

The PRPC recently initiated the process that facilitates the region's participation in the annual DHS data call. The region's emergency management coordinators (EMCs) have been invited to nominate facilities in their area that ought to be included on this year's critical infrastructure list. As the PRPC receives information back from

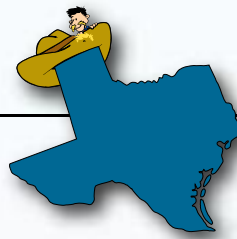
the EMCs, it will be entered into the LENS portal, the system used by DHS to collect critical infrastructure data from around the nation.

The data call is not only important for the federal government but in going through the process of assessing their infrastructure/key resource, local governments and private sector organizations can gain a better understanding of the types of facilities, resources and systems that keep their operations flowing. This information can help local planners in developing strategies for making those facilities and systems more resilient to potential failures.

The 2010 data call will continue through March 25, 2010. However this year, unlike in years past, the LENS portal will remain open once the data call is closed. This change will allow us to continue adding new information to the system throughout the year so that the process of gathering and inputting data does not have to be completed in a condensed timeframe this next year.

For more information about the 2010 CI/KR data call, contact John Kiehl at (806) 372-3381. †





TWDB Hearing for Petitioner



Water planning is an important topic in any geographic location, but especially in the Panhandle, where planning for future water needs is vital to the region's livelihood. To help inform residents of the Panhandle about key issues regarding water planning issues, we have included articles written by C. E. Williams, the General Manager of the Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District.

Planning for the future use of water

is a common but sometimes controversial topic among residents in the Texas Panhandle. Recently a hearing was held at the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC) building in Amarillo to help resolve an issue about groundwater.

According to Chapter 35 of the Texas Water Code establishing a Desired Future Condition (DFC) is required by Groundwater Management Areas (GMA) for the aquifers in their region. Recently GMA 1, which consists of 18 counties in the northern Texas Panhandle (see map at right), set the DFCs for the area. These DFCs were adopted on July 7, 2009, for the Ogallala Aquifer. The four northwest counties have set a DFC of 40 percent left in 50 years, Hemphill County is set to have 80 percent left after 50 years, and the remaining 13 counties have set 50 percent left in 50 years as their goal.

After GMA 1 established these DFCs, they were challenged by G & J Ranch Inc. and Mesa Water LP through the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB)

petition process. The hearing for the process was held at the PRPC building in Amarillo on November 11, 2009, to allow TWDB to hear both sides of the issue before coming to a resolution.

A significant crowd gathered to witness the testimonies of the petitioners and GMA 1. An hour and a half was allotted for each side to make their case, starting with the petitioners, G & J Ranch Inc. and Mesa Water LP.

Marty Jones, attorney for the petitioners, and Bob Harden, hydrologist, began with an explanation of the information they used and the reasons they believe the current DFCs are unreasonable. In their presentation they expressed concerns that the DFCs being drawn on county boundaries would make it ineffective for aquifer management. They also discussed the DFCs not being fairly distributed across the Panhandle.

Jones and Harden expressed their concern that these DFCs lead to differing assumptions about the water and affects the planning for the water.

The petitioners feel that the DFCs should be equally set across the Panhandle or be divided along the two subdivisions of the Ogallala Aquifer in order to be in compliance with Texas Water Code.

Harden said, "Proper management would be setting the DFCs based on the subdivisions of the aquifer."

GMA 1 responded by having representatives from each of the four groundwater districts explain the effectiveness of the DFC for their respective area.

Panhandle Groundwater Conservation District's General Manager C. E. Williams began by explaining that the District had set the goal of having 50 percent left in 50 years, over 10 years ago. A significant amount of time and effort has been put into place in order to determine what DFC would best serve the residents of PGCD.

"PGCD is working to preserve our water while creating value for the unproduced water," Williams explained.

High Plains UGWCD stated that their DFC was set for two reasons; to ensure the economic liability of the water and there is already significant support in place by the residents of their District.

North Plains GCD has two DFCs within their District. Steve Walthour, General Manager of NPGCD, explained that there were two different geographic areas within the district that need separate planning. There was also considerable public input for setting their DFCs.

Walthour said, "We want water to farm with in the future but we don't want to be out of business before the future arrives."

Hemphill County UGWCD utilized the majority of the time allotted to GMA 1. They used this time to explain the

ter while creating value for the unproduced water."

s Challenge of GMA 1 DFCs

importance of stream flow to their area and have determined the only way to protect this stream flow is to set a goal of 80 percent left in 50 years.

Several people spoke about the need for this goal as a way to provide good stewardship for our water.

"We should strive to leave our resources in better shape than we found them." Jim Haley, Board President of Hemphill County UGWCD, said.

Explanations were given about how water flow works, what the streams mean to the residents of Hemphill County, and the impact these streams have on their eco-tourism industry. The goal has been set so high in that region of the Panhandle because the residents support the goal and its foundations.

The hearing allowed both sides to explain their differing view points on the topic. TWDB petition process held the record open until November 25, 2009, for additional written evidence. The evidence and testimony will be analyzed by TWDB staff, then these recommendations and findings will be reported to the Board. TWDB will then make a decision regarding the reasonableness of the current DFCs. ♣

Understanding GMAs and DFCs

In 2005, House Bill 1763 created the structure for collaboration among local groundwater districts in shared aquifers. Now the process guided by Chapter 35 of the Texas Water Code has grown to include setting Desired Future Conditions within a Groundwater Management Area using water consumption data, regional planning tools and aquifer characteristics. This process is applied throughout the state to cover all of the aquifers of Texas.

(Continued on page 8)



Groundwater Management Area #1



Business Boot Camp helps entrepreneurs

Billed as a crash course for success, the Business Boot Camp, a two-and-a-half day seminar designed to offer cutting-edge business strategies, practical insights, and world-class training to help business owners build and sustain their businesses, was held last fall. This event was put on by the Entrepreneur Alliance, an entity comprised of eleven resource organizations in Amarillo, Borger, Dumas, Pampa, and Perryton that have joined forces to help promote entrepreneurial activity. The Planning Commission is one of the Alliance Partners.

With a mission designed to strengthen and grow the Texas Panhandle economy by promoting and facilitating entrepreneurial activity, the Entrepreneur Alliance is helping men and women throughout the region succeed in maintaining and



building their businesses.

"It's important that we provide a front door to entrepreneurs in this region, giving them the needed resources to help them get their new companies off the ground, as well as succeed once they are up and running," said Doug Nelson, the PRPC Economic Development Director.

"Together the alliance partners, along with various funding sponsors, help to underwrite the Business Boot Camp.

"As an Entrepreneur Alliance Partner, our participation in this exceptional training opportunity for existing and aspiring entrepreneurs is very exciting," said Nelson. "We expect this annual event to give our regions small businesses a greater opportunity for success."

Nelson served as a panelist on the Financing Your Business session, one of 15 educational seminars held for participants.

If you missed the 2009 Business Boot Camp, mark your calendars for this year's Sept. 15 – 17, 2010 event. For more information, contact Doug Nelson at dnelson@theprpc.org or visit www.getyourdream.org. ♣

Understanding GMAs & DFCs

(Continued from page 7)

Groundwater Management Areas (GMA) – were defined by the Texas Water Development Board in 2001. In these GMAs groundwater districts are required to work together to set a DFC for each aquifer.

Desired Future Condition (DFC) – is a quantifiable future groundwater condition. Groundwater districts try to look ahead to set a desired amount of water left for the aquifers in their district. DFCs help to set management goals and give an indication of what we want the aquifer to look like in the future.

After a DFC is set for a GMA, management plans and rules for implementation are required by each district to ensure the goals that have been set are achieved.

GMA 1 covers 18 counties in the Texas Panhandle and has set a DFC for the Ogallala aquifer and the Rita Blanca aquifer. GMA 1 is made up of Panhandle Groundwater Conservation

District, Hemphill County Underground Water Conservation District, part of High Plains Underground Water Conservation District No. 1, and North Plains Groundwater Conservation District.

For more information about GMAs, DFCs, the process that created them, and their guidelines please visit <http://www.twdb.state.tx.us/GwRD/GMA/gmahome.htm>. ♣



"...it will also enhance the communication between call takers from one city to another.."

Next Generation 9-1-1



Call takers in all 23 Panhandle call centers will be trained to use the new IP digital platform.

(Continued from page 1)
 a year in the process of designing, procuring, and negotiating what we feel is the best system for the region. We executed contracts with AT&T for the purchase of CPE, and the provision of a new network platform that will not only deliver 9-1-1 calls, but improve the way we as responders communicate within our 9-1-1 community."

The Regional 9-1-1 Network is currently implementing the first steps of NG9-1-1 functionality by installing IP-enabled call-taking equipment and deploying a high-speed broadband network between all 23 regional call centers and host locations. When fully deployed, the PRPC 9-1-1 Network will join the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG – Dallas) as the only COG 9-1-1 programs deploying the state-of-the-art MPLS class network identified as the optimum solution by the CSEC NG9-1-1 Master Plan. Weather permitting, the project is expected to be completed by April 1st.

"The new 9-1-1 call-taking equipment and IP platform will not only provide the digital "backbone" that will eventually enable callers needing 9-1-1 assistance to be able to reach an answering point using

a variety of technologies," said Green, "it will also enhance the communication between call takers from one city to another. Through instant messaging on our private network, one of the features will enable telecommunicators to "chat" with one another, sharing information with an adjacent county, or reporting a suspicious vehicle, or other such event."

As standards for instant, text and video messaging continue to be developed, Green says, the term "call" takes on a larger meaning than in the past. "It first means any real-time communications – voice, text, or video – between a person needing assistance and a PSAP call taker. But it will also include non-human initiated automatic event alerts, such as alarms, telematics, or sensor data, which may also include real-time communications."

In the mean time, "DO NOT ATTEMPT TO SEND A TEXT TO 9-1-1!!", Green emphasizes. "There exists a number of technical and operational barriers that are being addressed by service providers, device manufacturers and 9-1-1 professionals on a national and global level."

For more information about the NG9-1-1 equipment implementation, contact Greg Green at ggreen@theprpc.org. ♣

NG9-1-1 System: What will it be?

The NG9-1-1 System is an emergency call delivery and response system that will capitalize on advances in information and communications technologies, and will enable:

- Quicker and more robust information as the result of making a 9-1-1 call
- Better and more useful forms of information (text, images, and video) from any networked communications device
- Transfer of 9-1-1 calls between geographically dispersed PSAPs (and from PSAP to remote public safety dispatchers) if necessary
- Increased aggregation and sharing of data, resources, procedures, and standards to improve emergency response
- Maximized public capital and operating cost savings for emergency communications services ♣

Excerpted from US Department of Transportation NG9-1-1 System Description & High Level Requirements.

"...our region is much better prepared"

Hundreds attend second annual Preparedness *This year's focus on Continuity*



Following last year's conference that was met with extremely positive feedback, the PRPC's Panhandle Regional Emergency Management Advisory Committee (PREMAC) recently held its second annual Panhandle Regional Preparedness Conference. More than 475 were in attendance, including first responders, local government officials, law enforcement officers, and emergency management officials from throughout the Panhandle.

The day-long event, held at the Amarillo Civic Center, included a variety of speakers, interactive exhibits, training sessions, workshops, and networking opportunities. Sharon Nails, Emergency Management Coordinator, City of Houston, and President, Emergency Management Association of Texas, was the keynote speaker. A variety of exhibits were set up to display

Panhandle-based regional response equipment (see box below).

"This year's primary focus was on Continuity of Operations Planning or COOP," said PREMAC Conference Subcommittee Chairman and Amarillo Fire

Chief Steve Ross. "Every jurisdiction in the Panhandle operates under an Emergency Operations Plan, but very few have a formal COOP. There's not an organization in the region that provides an essential service to the public that

Conference Exhibitors

- Amarillo/Potter/Randall Office of Emergency Management
- City of Amarillo Fire Department
- City of Amarillo Police Department
- City of Hereford
- The Texas Department of State Health Services
- Texas Panhandle Chapter and the Eastern Texas Panhandle Chapter of the American Red Cross
- The Texas Baptist Men
- High Plains Food Bank
- Salvation Army
- Panhandle-Area Regional Information System
- CERT/Fire Corps
- The Texas Department of Public Safety

to respond in a cohesive and methodical way."

Conference of Operations Planning

would not benefit from having a COOP. The PREMAC wanted to make this one of the key conference topics so that participants could learn what a COOP is, why it's important, and how a COOP is built."

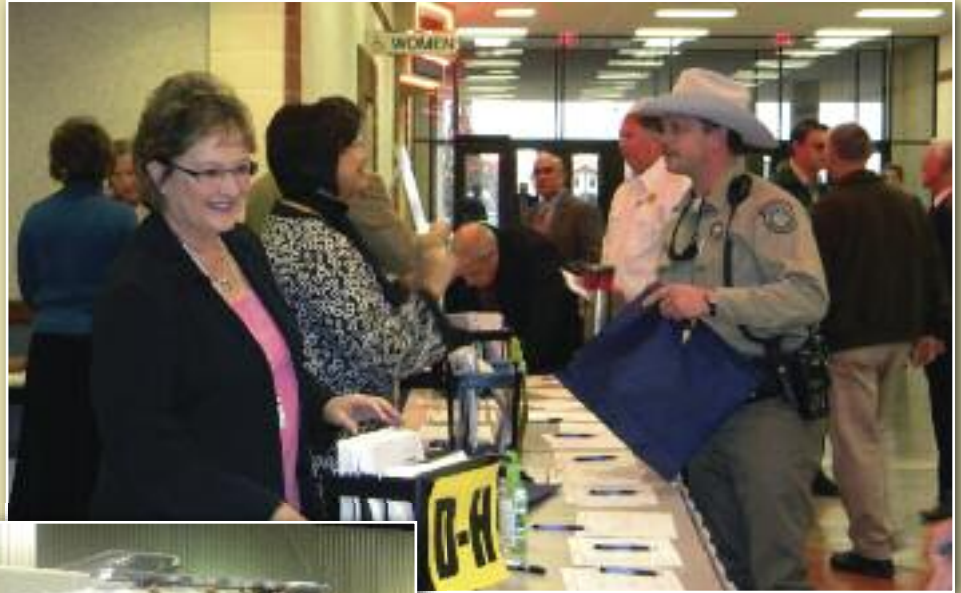
To help attendees understand the significance of COOPs, a panel discussion was held featuring Kevin Starbuck, Emergency Management Coordinator, Amarillo/Potter/Randall Counties; Bryan Tucker, City Manager, City of Childress; Harold Keeter, Judge, Swisher County; John Henderson, CEO, Childress Regional Medical Center; Michael Wartes, Superintendent, Canyon Independent School District; and Mike Engler, President and CEO, Cactus Feeders, Inc.

"This year's conference was able to build on the momentum begun last year," said Walt Kelley, PREMAC Chair and Emergency Administration Manager for the City of Amarillo. "Those who attended not only learned from the workshops and speakers about what is

new in terms of regional and state emergency preparedness, they also learned from one another. You can't underestimate the importance of talking with your counterparts in other communities."

"Feedback from those who attended this year was gratifying to all those individuals who worked hard to make the event a reality," said John Kiehl, PRPC

Regional Services Director. "The PREMAC Conference Sub-Committee deserves a lot of credit for putting together such a comprehensive event. When and if the time comes for our first responders to react to a disaster or catastrophic event, our region is much better prepared to respond in a cohesive and methodical way due to this conference." ♣



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PRPC's Amarillo headquarters gets a makeover

Now more than 50 years old, the PRPC headquarters building has been the home of the Planning Commission staff since 1993. According to PRPC's Executive Director Gary Pitner, it was time for some renovation and upgrades to the building "to protect our investment." The renovation plan, created in 2007, consisted of 18 months of construction that was finalized in 2009. The \$1.1 million effort included a new roof, substantial upgrades to the heating/ventilation/air conditioning system, exterior sidewalk and landscape improvements, exterior and interior painting, carpeting, and an elevator update. The renovation also included the addition of a new electrical power backup system, providing redundant power to ensure support for the increasing demands of the Regional 9-1-1 Network and Regional Emergency Preparedness programs.

"To help keep the project cost contained," said Pitner, "we did not hire a general contractor. Instead the PRPC served as its own general contractor, hiring our own skilled trades professionals to handle specific pieces of the project.

"This building has served the Planning Commission well," Pitner continued, "so investing in its upkeep and enhancement will ensure the building lasts for many more years to come."