



## Executive director's update

By Bryan Collier



It has been several months since Hurricane Harvey made landfall on the Texas coast and left behind a trail of destruction and flooding. Many Texans whose homes and businesses were destroyed or damaged are still dealing with the hurricane's aftermath, including a number of TDCJ employees.

To everyone who suffered because of Hurricane Harvey, but most of all to our own employees, I want to wish a full and speedy recovery. I hope those of you who work for TDCJ and were impacted by the storm have benefitted from the generosity of your fellow coworkers and corrections professionals across the country. We have done our utmost to identify affected employees and, through the contributions of agency staff and many other concerned individuals, tried to provide some assistance to help address your immediate needs. The support shown by so many is truly heartwarming. God bless those who were harmed, those who have assisted those in need, and each and every one of you who helped this agency fulfill its vital public safety mission despite an unprecedented natural disaster.

As to the impact of the hurricane on the agency, I am pleased to say it was very limited given the magnitude of the storm. Most importantly, no one was harmed. A few agency buildings sustained minor damage, some of which has already been repaired. Some roads, bridges, fencing and equipment were also damaged, and the agency's agricultural production incurred some losses as well.

While the damage resulting from Hurricane Harvey may have been minor, the efforts necessary to protect public safety and prevent extensive damage, serious injury and perhaps even the loss of life were anything but. If not for the amazing and inspiring performance of TDCJ's dedicated public servants, the outcome might have been disastrous for both the public and the offender population. Our staff safely and securely evacuated thousands of incarcerated offenders from flooded areas, continued to monitor thousands of offenders on street supervision in the affected communities, and maintained all the essential services necessary to support every unit, every parole office and every other vital function performed by the agency.

Hurricane Harvey was a terrible natural disaster which presented the agency with a monumental challenge, and only through the Herculean effort of our employees was success made possible. To say I'm proud is an understatement. I simply cannot thank you enough for your public service.

This issue of the *Connections* newsletter is largely devoted to telling the story of how TDCJ employees responded to the challenges of the natural disaster. It would require a book to even begin to do justice to the exemplary work performed by our staff, but I hope the articles and photos convey the magnitude of the challenge and the dedication and determination of our workforce. To all employees, let me once again say thank you, not just for your actions during the hurricane, but for what you do each and every day. It is an honor to be the Executive Director of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. ▲