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TDCJ, TxDOT help protect community during Memorial Day floods

In early May, the Texas Department of Transportation asked TDCJ for help filling sandbags for use as a defense against anticipated flooding. At the Wynne Unit in Huntsville, 20 outside trusty offenders filled nearly 700 sandbags in the first hour of operations. Ultimately, TDCJ offenders from more than a half dozen TDCJ units used almost 75 tons of sand to produce more than 48,000 sandbags.

Sandbags standby for transportation to flood-threatened communities. TDCJ offenders worked to fill more than 48,000 sandbags.

The sandbags were loaded onto pallets at TxDOT locations and distributed to flood-threatened communities along the Trinity River to help deal with the unprecedented rainfall Texas received during the month of May, which culminated in severe flooding during the Memorial Day weekend. May 2015 set a record as the wettest month in Texas history, with an average of 8.81 inches of rain across the state. Many areas had to deal with rainfall totals of 15 to 20 inches.

Nearly 75 tons of state-provided sand were used to protect Texas homes and property during the May floods.

"This is just one way that TDCJ shows its commitment to helping the citizens of the state of Texas in their time of need," said Correctional Institutions Division Director Bill Stephens. "The agency stands ready to answer the call for further assistance should it be requested." Stephens also noted that it's not just the public who benefits from TDCJ's relief efforts, saying the offenders who participate also benefit from the knowledge their labor is helping people in need.

In addition to providing support for sandbag production, TDCJ's Manufacturing and Logistics Division helped the State Operations Center manufacture cable slings for emergency rescue and response operations. These slings, referred to as "Molly Hogans," were

Offenders at the Huntsville Unit's Mechanical Department fabricate "Molly Hogan" response-and-rescue slings using materials provided by the State Operations Center.

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fabricated from SOC-provided materials at the Huntsville Unit Mechanical Department, and transported by the Texas Forest Service to McGregor Texas. The factory, which had no prior experience with the product, produced 544 of the cable slings in only four days, completing their work on Friday, May 29.

TDCJ offenders helped manufacture more than 500 flood response-and-rescue slings in four days.

The Pack and Luther Units also assisted the City of Navasota with flood response, providing work squads to help clear downed trees and clean up debris.