



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**July 14, 2016**

**CONTACT: Steve Harris, Emergency Management Coordinator**  
424 S. Castell Ave.  
New Braunfels, TX 78130  
830.221.4270  
sharris@nbtexas.org

**Local VOAD Trains for Emergency Response**

**New Braunfels, Texas** — The Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) is a coalition of second responder organizations. Comal County VOAD members each have a specialty area that helps to fill the gap not met by local governments during and after a disaster.

Comal County VOAD includes the American Red Cross (provides sheltering), the Salvation Army (provides meals and donations management), the Tree of Life Church, (provides spontaneous volunteers and sheltering), Connections (provides disaster counseling), and United Way (provides management of monetary donations which are critically needed during times of crisis). Other local spiritual groups provide volunteers to assist these organizations with their tasks.

The VOAD is committed to fostering the four C's—communication, coordination, collaboration, and cooperation in order to better serve people impacted by disasters. The Comal County VOAD is the collection of nonprofit organizations and volunteers that work in all phases of disaster—preparedness, response, relief, recovery, and mitigation.

“VOAD is comprised of a loose coalition of organizations that participate on a voluntary basis,” said City of New Braunfels Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC) Steve Harris. “VOAD chapters begin coordinating and communicating with their member organizations very soon in a disaster. One purpose of this coordination is to discourage members from ‘self-deploying,’ or attempting to assist the community in an uncoordinated manner. Uncoordinated responses cause confusion among first responders, emergency managers, and members of the community. An uncoordinated response can produce inefficient resource deployment and duplication of efforts.”

“The Comal County VOAD’s mission is to foster efficient, streamlined service delivery to people affected by disaster, while eliminating unnecessary duplication of effort through cooperation,” said Terry Robinson, Executive Director of United Way of Comal County. “Among other things, we collaborate with local governments to achieve our mission.”

Comal County VOAD meets quarterly and participates in trainings such as the upcoming Incident Command Systems (ICS) training on July 26<sup>th</sup> that will be conducted by both the City of New Braunfels EMC and the Comal County EMC.

“All local jurisdictions work using the ICS during emergencies,” Harris said. “ICS is a standardized approach to the command, control, and coordination of emergency response providing a common chain of command within which responders from multiple agencies can be effective. One of the benefits of the ICS is that it allows a way to coordinate a set of organizations who may otherwise only work together sporadically.”

Organizations interested in learning more about the local VOAD should contact Terry Robinson at 830-620-7760.

**###**