



**HOUSTON
ANNUAL REPORT 2008**



Houston Federal Executive Board

2008 ANNUAL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

The Houston Federal Executive Board (HFEB) serves a large 22 County area along the upper Texas Gulf Coast with a population of over 6,000,000 people. Federal agencies are represented in all major metropolitan areas including Houston, Galveston, Beaumont, Port Arthur, Orange, Conroe, Huntsville, Livingston, Katy, and Sealy, Texas. There are 109 Federal agencies with a population of government employees exceeding 31,900.

For Fiscal Year 2008, the Houston Federal Executive Board exceeded it's expectations under the outstanding leadership of the Chair, Ruben Monzon, U. S. Marshal, Southern District of Texas, and the Vice-Chair, Jorge Lopez, Director, Houston National Cemetery.

In addition to the executive leadership, the HFEB relied upon the various committees, whose hard work and diligence allowed the HFEB to accomplish its goals. These committees include: The Emergency Preparedness Committee, with 25 agencies represented; The Training Committee, with 14 agencies represented; The Diversity Committee, with 15 agencies represented; The Dive Committee with 6 agencies represented; The Gulf Coast Federal Safety Council, with 23 agencies represented; and The Alternative Dispute Resolution committee, (Shared Neutrals) with 11 agencies represented.

During fiscal year 2008 the Houston Federal Executive Board continued to increase collaborations with the Cities of Houston, Galveston, Beaumont, Port Arthur, and Conroe as well as the major populated counties including Harris County, Montgomery County, Galveston County, Jefferson County and Fort Bend County. These collaborations paid off when the Houston area experienced a tropical storm and two hurricanes in a one month period.

Throughout the year, Federal agencies in the 22 county areas provided their support of the HFEB. However, attendance at all HFEB sponsored functions continued to decline from levels reached over previous years. Most agencies cited lack of funds as the primary reason for lower attendance at HFEB sponsored training courses.

1. Line of Business: Emergency Preparedness, Security and Employee Safety

Emergency Preparedness and Continuity of Operations were tested to the extreme this year. Tropical Storm Edouard came into the Houston area August 5, 2008, with strong winds and heavy rain. Many agencies activated their COOP Plan in anticipation of a “flood” event. The HFEB Executive Director was scheduled to instruct in a COOP Managers Course in Harlingen Texas August 6 and 7, 2008, but cancelled participation to assist in hurricane preparations. As it turned out, Edouard did little damage to the area, providing only much needed rain. Three weeks later, Hurricane Gustav threatened the Gulf Coast. It made landfall on September 1, 2008 as a Category 2 Storm, along the south central Louisiana coast. The Houston area suffered minimal damage, but the Beaumont Texas area, located along the Texas Louisiana line sustained moderate damage and some severe flooding. The HFEB worked with the agencies, providing up-to-date storm information continuously over a 36 hour period as the storm made landfall. The HFEB stayed in close contact with agencies, especially those in East Texas, assessing their readiness and continually monitoring their status. This information, along with the staging of supplies and other preparations made by FEMA Region 6, was re-broadcast to agencies and to OPM.

Two weeks later, Hurricane Ike was in the Gulf of Mexico, poised to strike the Texas coast. With the storm increasing to a Category 4, and likely to be the upper Texas coast, the Houston area quickly made preparations. Federal Agencies in the Houston area, including the HFEB, activated their COOP plans and many relocated to their alternate site. However, since landfall was projected to take place on a Saturday morning, a number of agencies elected to wait and see what would transpire.

The County Judges in the coastal counties of Galveston and Brazoria, after consultation with State officials, called for the mandatory evacuation of communities in their respective counties. This was announced by zip code, which proved to be significantly better than the evacuations that took place two years prior when Hurricane Rita threatened. Ike came ashore early Saturday morning, on Galveston Island, September 13, 2008 as a Category 2 Hurricane.

Barrier islands along the upper Texas Coast, including Galveston, and the Bolivar Peninsula, were inundated by a 12 foot storm surge, which breached the sea wall in Galveston. Areas along the Texas coast sustained heavy damage. The entire Houston area sustained moderate to heavy damage from hurricane force winds, and subsequent loss of power. The Beaumont and Port Arthur areas sustained very heavy wind damage along with flooding caused by a 17 foot storm surge.

Prior to the storm, as FEMA Region 6 began positioning supplies and equipment in Texas and Louisiana, the HFEB was involved in numerous conference calls to determine readiness of agencies. The HFEB was able to maintain communications with agencies via cell phone and emails – primarily via Blackberry. On Sunday, as agencies began to assess damage, many agencies found out they could not return to their offices. Some agencies elected to allow employees to work from home, others gave their non-essential employees administrative leave, while others stood up their alternate COOP sites and continued business. All federal buildings in Houston, Galveston and Beaumont sustained damage and were closed. Several days into the recovery from Ike, the HFEB, still, without power and water, relocated to the Montgomery County Emergency Operations Center (through an existing MOU), which had power. For the next several days, the HFEB kept in continuous contact with the Houston and Beaumont area Federal agencies, FEMA Region 6, FEMA National Office, and the Office of Personnel Management. The HFEB assisted FEMA Region 6 in the location of Points of Distribution (PODs), relaying request from local offices to FEMA. While the recovery seemed slow at times, all Houston area Federal agencies were “open for business” by

Monday, September 22, 2008. On Tuesday, September 23, 2008, the Executive Director met with Texas Governor Rick Perry, the Montgomery County Judge and local Montgomery County officials to discuss the county's response to the hurricane. Hurricane Ike had become the third most costly Hurricane in U. S. history.

The HFEB Executive Director was interviewed by Federal News Radio about the Federal response to Hurricane Ike and the recovery efforts being made in the Houston and Galveston area.

The HFEB hosted a COOP Managers "Train-the-Trainer" course for the U. S. Courts only. The course was attended by 48 individuals from the U. S. Courts. The course also included NIMS/ICS 100/200/700/800 training, to enhance the knowledge of the COOP Managers.

The HFEB, in partnership with the FBI, sponsored four specialized one-day courses for federal, state and local law enforcement, titled Introduction to IEDs. A total of 121 attended the courses.

The HFEB, partnering with the U.S. Coast Guard, sponsored several Basic and Intermediate Incident Command System training courses. The courses were attended by 100 Federal, County and local officials.

During FY 08, the HFEB continued its close working relationship with the City of Houston's Office of Emergency Planning. The Director of the OEP is a member of the HFEB's Emergency Preparedness Committee, as are representatives of the Houston Police Department and the City of Houston's Office of the Mayor. Other members include representative from the Harris County Sheriff's Office and Montgomery County OEP.

The HFEB Emergency Preparedness Committee, partnering with FEMA Region 6, sponsored a Hurricane Tabletop Exercise at the beginning of hurricane season. Twenty-seven agencies— participated. In addition, the HFEB worked with the State of Texas to promote their hurricane conferences and tabletop exercises in many areas in and around the Texas coast. These exercises were for the purpose of announcing the State’s new, revised evacuation plan.

The HFEB Executive Director participated in quarterly Anti-Terrorism Advisory Council meetings sponsored by the U. S. Attorney’s Office.

The HFEB Executive Director attended the FEMA Region 6/FEB Annual COOP Working Group conference in Denton Texas.

The HFEB successfully completed a test of local Emergency Communications plan.

The HFEB worked closely with the U. S. Coast Guard in producing an Industry Day in the Houston area.

2. Line of Business: Human Capital Readiness

Again during FY 08, offered a variety of low cost, high quality training courses to Federal employees. In FY 08, the HFEB sponsored Vital Records training, Pre-Retirement Seminars, NIMS/ICS Courses, COOP Managers Course, Executive Leadership Seminars, the Texas Labor Management Conference, Hurricane Tabletop Exercise, the Government Procurement Connection Conference, For FY 08, the HFEB trained or sponsored training that reached more than 325 Federal employees, plus state and local government employees, at significant cost savings to agencies. The HFEB sponsored courses realized a savings to agencies of over \$50,669.00.

The annual Excellence in Government Awards Program was a tremendous success again this year. Agencies were provided 10 award categories and judging criteria and asked to submit nominations to the HFEB. In FY 08, twenty-nine agencies responded, nominating more than 150 Federal employees. An annual Awards Luncheon, held the first week in May to coincide with Public Service Recognition Week, attracted more than 128 government employees including the category winners, their supervisors, and agency heads.

In the area of Alternative Dispute Resolution, the Shared Neutrals of the HFEB responded to 15 requests for mediators from six separate Federal agencies. This year's lower number of mediation request is consistent with the downward trend we've be seeing in this area. It can partially be attributed to the increase in agency sponsored "in-house" mediation programs. The Shared Neutrals program, which uses co-mediation, was able to successfully resolve 11 of the mediations for a success rate of 73 per cent.

The HFEB again partnered with the City of Houston to sponsor the annual Veterans' Day Parade. The HFEB is a part of the parade committee and works closely with the City of Houston's Parks and Recreation Department in putting together an outstanding tribute to the men and women veterans of the armed forces, including those serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Over 20,000 spectators watched this year's parade which included 43 Federal employees serving as parade marshals.

The HFEB annually serves as a co-sponsor of the Texas Labor Management Conference. The Executive Director is on the Conference Board of Directors. The HFEB Executive Director is a co-founder of the conference, dating back to 1992. The conference is an annual event held each May on the River Walk in San Antonio, and attracts hundreds of labor management professionals from all over the US. This year's conference included over 100 Federal Labor-Management officials.

The Executive Director was interviewed twice by Federal Times for information on the Houston area locality pay and local recruitment and retention efforts.

The Executive Director, working closely with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Special Agent in Charge, and the U. S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Texas, appeared before the Federal Salary Council to propose the inclusion of Hardin, Orange and Jefferson Counties in to the Houston Area locality pay.

The Executive Director of the HFEB attended the Federal Executive Board ED meeting and the Federal Executive Boards' annual National Conference.

3. FOUNDATION FUNCTION: INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

The Texas Gulf Coast Combined Federal Campaign is again on track to be an outstanding success, The HFEB worked closely with the Chair of the CFC and assisted the “loaned executives” in running an aggressive campaign. The Campaign goal was \$3,100,000.00. To date, the CFC has received contributions totaling \$3,050,620.00, the largest contributed amount ever. Thirty-five percent of the Federal employees in the Gulf Coast area contributed. The average gift was \$289.00 and the per capita gift was \$102.00.

The Houston Federal Executive Board has supported diversity through a variety of partnerships with various organizations such as HFEB’s Diversity Committee, Federally Employed Women, Black Employment Program Managers’ Committee, the Hispanic Employment Program Managers’ Committee, and other community partners. This years Federal Employed Women’s Conference attracted over 150 participants. The HFEB is routinely called upon to provide Federal guidance and information to the Federal community and to the public.

In the area of competitive sourcing, the HFEB continued its partnership with the City of Houston by co-sponsoring the annual Government Procurement Connections Conference (GPC) in Houston. The HFEB was able to recruit 13 Federal agencies to participate in the conference which is designed to provide information and advice to minority and small business contractors on how to do business with the Federal government. The GPC was attended by more than 10,000 minority and small business representatives. The Executive Director appeared on a cable TV news program discussing the Federal support of the GPC.

The Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee (ADR) is responsible for the HFEB's Shared Neutrals Program. This year, the HFEB accepted 15 requests from seven agencies for mediation and responded by successfully resolving 11 (or 73%) of the cases.

Of significance this year is the partnership with Texas Southern University (TSU), a "historically Black college". The highlight of this partnership was our Congressional Seminar and breakfast. TSU hosted this event. In attendance was the Mayor of the City of Houston, four Congressional Representatives, and sixty-eight Federal Executives representing 42 Federal agencies. Also in attendance was the TSU President and members of the TSU Board of Regents. All in all, a very successful event with promise of future collaborations.

4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As previously mentioned, the Houston Federal Executive Board had an outstanding year, and despite lower attendance at many of the HFEB sponsored functions, all the goals were exceeded.

The value the HFEB adds to the Federal community cannot be overstated. The most valued accomplishments include intrinsic factors that are difficult to measure, but pay significant dividends in times of crisis.

The HFEB has brought the Federal, state and local officials together in numerous settings, so that when a crisis occurs; we know who all the players are and will not be exchanging business cards. This was borne out in the coordination of the Federal response to the three major storms that struck the Houston area. The HFEB is continually building and strengthening relationships.

The HFEB's added emphasis on Disaster Preparedness training assures that the Federal community will be prepared and COOP plans will be up to date.

The HFEB continues to offer diverse, low cost, high quality training to the Federal community. Agencies continue to rely on the HFEB when training budgets are significantly reduced.

The HFEB's Excellence in Government Awards Program and support of Public Service Recognition Week has greatly enhanced agencies abilities to recognize their employees when awards budgets are reduced.

The Combined Federal Campaign in the post-Katrina/Rita Texas Gulf Coast continues to exceed expectations. The HFEB's strong leadership and support of the CFC has been the key to that success.