

# Ensure Texas Prisons are Prepared for Emergencies and Natural Disasters

## Policy Background

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) operates not only the largest prison system in any state, but also one of the largest in the world. Preparing such a large system for an emergency requires adequate planning mechanisms – but those are not currently in place at TDCJ. This was evident during Hurricane Harvey in 2017 and Texas' winter freeze in 2021, as well as during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Texas must ensure that TDCJ has a proper emergency management plan before another disaster strikes. It is critical that incarcerated people have the support and supplies needed to make it through declared disasters without experiencing inadequate or dangerous conditions.

## Proposed Solution

Texas leaders should create an advisory board of subject matter experts, correctional staff, and system-impacted people; this group can inform new TDCJ policies that protect incarcerated people against issues like insufficient hygiene supplies or protective equipment, extended lockdowns, and gaps in proper healthcare.

## Relevant Bills

- **Bill Number:** [HB 1446](#) [Cortez]  
**Bill Caption:** Relating to procedures governing declared disasters for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.  
**Materials:** [FAQ produced by the Statewide Leadership Council](#) | [Infographic](#)

## Other Materials

- TCJE webpage: [Statewide Leadership Council 2023 Priorities](#) (opens in a new tab)(Emergency Management in Texas Prisons) [2022-23]
- JustLeadershipUSA webinar featuring TCJE's Maggie Luna: [A Perfect Storm](#) (opens in a new tab)[June 2022]
- TCJE fact sheet on HB 2331 (2021 legislative session): [Texas Prisons Must be Better Prepared for Declared Disasters](#) (opens in a new tab)[March 2021]