From: Webster, Susan
To: Mason, Steve
Cc: Broyles, Ragan
Subject: West / LEPC
Date: Wednesday, May 01, 2013 9:40:04 AM

Confidential/Enforcement Sensitive

Please review per discussion. tx

From: Gray, David
Sent: Wednesday, May 01, 2013 9:06 AM
To: Webster, Susan
Subject: Fw:

From: Assunto, Carmen
Sent: Wednesday, May 01, 2013 7:32:15 AM
To: Gray, David
Subject: WRAA Article: New questions surround McLennan County emergency planning

http://www.wfaa.com/news/investigates/New-questions-surround-McLennan-Co-Emergency-Plan-Committee--205480441.html#

New questions surround McLennan County emergency planning

by BRETT SHIPP

WFAA

Posted on April 30, 2013 at 10:00 PM

Updated yesterday at 11:13 PM

McLennan County has been receiving federal dollars to help run a federally-mandated emergency planning committee that may not exist, a News 8 investigation has found.

On April 17, the West Fertilizer Company exploded, resulting in death for 12 first responders. Last week, a News 8 investigation found McLennan County officials did not appoint a mandatory local emergency planning committee prior to the explosion.

As investigators comb the debris at the fertilizer plant, new questions are surfacing about what firefighters knew about any chemical threats... and how county officials should have been prepared.

Audio tapes of first responders at the scene gave no indication they were aware that a potentially explosive situation awaited.

That's the kind of information that might have been discussed by what's known as a Local

Emergency Planning Committee, or LEPC. Each county in Texas is mandated by federal law to have one.

According to an LEPC handbook provided by the Governor's Division of Emergncy Management:

> "...the LEPC serves as a focal point in the community for information and discussions about hazardous substance emergency planning, and health and environmental risks."
>
> "LEPCs are crucial to local hazardous materials planning and community right-to-know programs."

Steve Howie heads up the 14-member LEPC in Kaufman County. "We are here for one reason, and that's to protect the citizens we serve," he said. "So it's imperative we know what we've got, know what we are going into up front, and what our options are as to whether we go in and fight, lay back and evacuate."

State records show McLennan County Judge Scott Felton heads up his county's LEPC. Last week, by phone, Judge Felton told News 8 he had no knowledge of the LEPC in his county as he has only been in office since October 2012.

On Tuesday, in person, Judge Felton knew little more.

"I know they have plans in place to handle certain [emergencies]," Felton said. "There's a group of people that met in June before I came on."

Felton said the LEPC head is actually McLennan County Emergency Management Coordinator Frank Patterson. Last week, Patterson told News 8 by phone he did not have any information about the county's LEPC's makeup or management.

But at the same time, News 8 has discovered applications in 2009 and again this year by McLennan County seeking an estimated $80,000 a year in federal grants for — among other things — LEPC meetings and for LEPC operations.

On Tuesday, we were told that LEPC records *do* exist, and the committee met last June. When we asked for an accounting of that $80,000 yearly federal grant — specifically any money spent for the LEPC — we were told we would have to file a formal request for information.

In an e-mail last weekend, Emergency Management Director Patterson called our story "inaccurate" and "unsubstantiated." Over the past three days, we have asked for interviews, evidence and clarification of his comments.

Patterson has not responded, and we're told he is busy in West helping the town recover from the explosion.

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