



Responsible Gun Ownership, Disaster Preparedness & Public Safety

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Texas Matters Principle

Safe communities are built before emergencies happen.

Through preparation, responsible citizenship, trusted partnerships, and informed decision-making, Texans can help create communities that are safer, stronger, and more resilient for everyone.

What Matters Most to...?

ME

How can I help keep myself, my family, and my neighbors safe?

Public safety begins with each of us. Whether it's understanding responsible firearm ownership, preparing for emergencies, learning evacuation routes, checking on neighbors during disasters, or knowing how to respond in a crisis, individual preparedness helps protect the people we care about most.

US

How do we build communities that are safe, prepared, and resilient?

Strong communities depend on more than emergency responders.

They rely on well-trained law enforcement, firefighters, emergency medical personnel, healthcare providers, emergency managers, schools, businesses, nonprofit organizations, volunteers, and informed citizens working together.



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TOMORROW

What investments and decisions we make today will help keep future generations safe?

Texas continues to grow, bringing new opportunities and new challenges.

Preparing for the future means investing wisely in emergency response systems, resilient infrastructure, public safety, responsible firearm ownership, healthcare, disaster preparedness, and community partnerships.

The choices Texans make today will influence how well future generations are protected from crime, natural disasters, public health emergencies, and other challenges.

Why This Matters

Safe communities are essential to Texas' quality of life, economic success, and resilience. Effective public safety depends on well-prepared first responders, informed citizens, responsible firearm ownership, strong emergency response systems, and communities that are ready to respond to disasters and recover together.

Texas also faces hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, wildfires, winter storms, drought, industrial accidents, and other emergencies. Strong disaster systems help communities prepare, respond, recover, and become more resilient.

How can Texas keep communities safe, protect individual rights, strengthen disaster preparedness, and ensure first responders have the tools and resources they need to serve the public effectively?

1. What makes a community safe?



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Answer

Community safety is shaped by many interconnected factors, including:

- Effective police, fire, and emergency medical services
- Trust between residents and public-safety agencies
- Prepared schools, businesses, and neighborhoods
- Access to mental-health and crisis services
- Safe roads and public spaces
- Responsible firearm ownership
- Reliable emergency communications
- Economic opportunity and stable communities
- Cooperation among local, state, federal, nonprofit, and private partners

Law enforcement is an important part of public safety, but safe communities also rely on prevention, preparedness, strong relationships, and responsible individual behavior.

Why It Matters

Safe communities depend on more than emergency response—they require prevention, preparedness, strong partnerships, and informed public policy. Understanding the many factors that contribute to public safety helps Texans evaluate proposed solutions, understand the choices before our communities, and **vote with confidence**.

2. What does responsible gun ownership mean?

Answer

Responsible gun ownership means exercising firearm rights with care, knowledge, and respect for the safety of others.



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Why It Matters

Responsible firearm ownership helps protect individuals, families, and communities while respecting the constitutional rights of lawful gun owners. Understanding what responsible ownership involves helps Texans evaluate firearm policies, encourage safe practices, and **vote with confidence**.

3. Who can legally own or possess a firearm?

Answer

In general, Texas law allows adults who are not prohibited by state or federal law from possessing firearms to own them.

Federal and state law prohibit firearm possession by certain individuals, including many people:

- Convicted of certain felony offenses (subject to specific legal rules)
- Convicted of certain domestic violence offenses under federal law
- Subject to certain court orders
- Otherwise prohibited under state or federal law

Eligibility depends on the individual's circumstances and applicable law.

Why It Matters

Texas has a long tradition of responsible firearm ownership, and with that right comes the responsibility to understand and follow the law. Knowing who may legally own or possess a firearm helps Texans understand their rights and legal responsibilities, promote safe and responsible ownership, and protect public safety. Understanding these laws also helps citizens thoughtfully evaluate firearm policies and **vote with confidence**.



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4. Does Texas require a License to Carry (LTC)?

Answer

No—not for many adults.

Since September 1, 2021, Texas has generally allowed **permitless (sometimes called "constitutional") carry** for many people who are legally eligible to possess a handgun and meet the statutory requirements.

However, a License to Carry (LTC) is still available and many Texans continue to obtain an LTC because it provides additional legal benefits and reciprocity with many other states.

Why It Matters

Understanding Texas' current handgun carry laws helps Texans know their rights and responsibilities, make informed decisions about whether obtaining a License to Carry best meets their needs, and comply with state law. It also helps citizens thoughtfully evaluate firearm policies and **vote with confidence**.

5. Does Texas require firearm safety training before buying a gun?

Answer

Generally, no.



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Texas does not require mandatory firearm safety training before purchasing most firearms.

However, many organizations—including Texas Parks and Wildlife, firearm instructors, shooting ranges, and national safety organizations—strongly encourage voluntary training.

Why It Matters

Owning a firearm carries important responsibilities. Although Texas does not require firearm safety training before purchasing most firearms, understanding safe handling, storage, and operation can help prevent accidents and promote responsible ownership. Learning about firearm safety also helps Texans thoughtfully evaluate firearm policies and **vote with confidence**.

6. Are safe storage laws required in Texas?

Answer

Texas encourages safe firearm storage, particularly around children. Safe storage may include:

- Gun safes
- Lock boxes
- Cable locks
- Trigger locks

Texas law also imposes criminal penalties in some circumstances if a child gains access to a readily accessible firearm because it was not properly secured.

Why It Matters

Safe firearm storage helps protect families, prevent unauthorized access, and promote responsible gun ownership. Understanding Texas' laws and recommended safety practices helps Texans fulfill their responsibilities, support public safety, and **vote with**



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confidence.

7. Where are firearms generally prohibited?

Answer

Even with permitless carry or an LTC, firearms are prohibited in certain locations established by Texas law, such as some schools, polling places during voting, courts, secured areas of airports, and certain other restricted locations.

Private property owners may also prohibit firearms on their premises by providing notice consistent with Texas law.

Why It Matters

Understanding where firearms are prohibited helps Texans balance their constitutional rights with their legal responsibilities. Knowing these laws promotes responsible firearm ownership, protects public safety, and helps citizens thoughtfully evaluate firearm policies and **vote with confidence**.

8. What are "Red Flag" laws?

Answer

Red Flag laws—also called **Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO)** laws—allow courts in some states to temporarily restrict a person's access to firearms when a judge determines, under that state's legal standard, that the person poses a serious risk of harming themselves or others.

Supporters generally argue these laws can help prevent suicides and acts of violence while involving judicial oversight.



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Critics generally argue they may raise due-process and Second Amendment concerns if not carefully designed.

Why It Matters

Red Flag laws raise important questions about balancing constitutional rights, due process, and public safety. Understanding how these laws work—and the different perspectives surrounding them—helps Texans thoughtfully evaluate firearm policies, understand the tradeoffs involved, and **vote with confidence**.

9. Does Texas have a Red Flag law?

Answer

No.

Texas also does **not** have a state Extreme Risk Protection Order law.

In 2025, the Texas Legislature enacted legislation prohibiting Texas courts from issuing civil extreme-risk protection orders and limiting state participation in enforcing future federal red-flag orders, reflecting the state's policy against adopting such laws.

Why It Matters

Because **this issue involves questions of public safety, constitutional rights, and due process**, it is often the subject of thoughtful debate. Understanding Texas' current approach—and the reasons supporters and critics offer for different policies—helps Texans participate in informed conversations and **vote with confidence**.



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10. How are concerns about dangerous behavior addressed in Texas?

Answer

Even without a Red Flag law, existing Texas and federal laws provide mechanisms that may apply in some situations, including:

- Criminal investigations and prosecutions
- Protective orders in qualifying circumstances
- Mental-health commitment procedures when legal standards are met
- Domestic violence laws
- Federal prohibitions applicable to certain individuals

The legal standards and procedures differ depending on the circumstances.

Why It Matters

Understanding the legal tools Texas already uses to address dangerous behavior helps Texans better evaluate discussions about public safety, mental health, domestic violence, and firearm policy. It also helps citizens understand the choices before our state, thoughtfully evaluate proposed changes, and **vote with confidence**.

11. What is the role of law enforcement in public safety?

Answer

Law-enforcement agencies help prevent and investigate crime, respond to emergencies, protect people and property, enforce laws, manage traffic safety, and coordinate with other public-safety partners.



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Effective law enforcement depends on:

- Professional training
- Clear policies
- Appropriate staffing and equipment
- Accountability and transparency
- Community cooperation
- Accurate information and intelligence
- Coordination with prosecutors, courts, schools, healthcare providers, and social services

State and local agencies may also support evacuation, search and rescue, emergency security, and disaster logistics. Texas DPS describes disaster duties that include rescue support, evacuation coordination, security patrols, and assistance at shelters and distribution sites.

Why It Matters

Public confidence is strengthened when law enforcement is effective, accountable, appropriately resourced, and connected to the communities it serves.

12. Who is responsible for disaster response in Texas?

Answer

Disaster response generally begins at the local level. City and county officials, police, firefighters, emergency medical services, hospitals, utilities, school districts, and local emergency managers are often the first to respond.

When an emergency exceeds local capacity, regional, state, federal, nonprofit, and private-sector partners may provide additional resources.



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The Texas Division of Emergency Management coordinates the state's all-hazards emergency-management program and assists cities, counties, and state agencies with planning and implementation.

Why It Matters

Understanding how disaster response is organized helps Texans know who is responsible for planning, coordinating, and responding to emergencies. It also helps citizens ask informed questions, evaluate the preparedness of their communities and elected leaders, and **vote with confidence**.

13. What are the phases of emergency management?

Answer

Emergency management is usually described through four connected phases:

Mitigation

Reducing risks before a disaster, such as improving drainage, strengthening buildings, managing wildfire hazards, or protecting critical infrastructure.

Preparedness

Developing plans, training responders, conducting exercises, maintaining supplies, and educating the public.

Response

Protecting life and property during and immediately after an emergency through warnings, evacuations, rescue, medical care, shelters, security, and resource distribution.

Recovery

Restoring homes, businesses, infrastructure, public services, and community well-being after the immediate danger has passed.



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Why It Matters

Strong disaster systems do not begin when the emergency occurs. Planning, prevention, and recovery are just as important as the immediate response.

14. How should Texas invest in disaster-response systems?

Answer

Effective disaster systems may require investment in:

- Emergency communications and alert systems
- Trained personnel
- Fire, rescue, medical, and law-enforcement equipment
- Emergency operations centers
- Shelters and evacuation planning
- Weather monitoring and forecasting
- Backup power and communications
- Cybersecurity
- Mutual-aid agreements
- Disaster supplies and logistics
- Resilient roads, water, energy, and healthcare systems
- Training and public education

TDEM provides emergency-management and hazardous-materials training for responders, public officials, and volunteer organizations involved in disasters.

Why It Matters

Prepared systems can respond faster, communicate more clearly, reduce harm, and help communities recover more effectively.



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15. How should Texans prepare for emergencies?

Answer

Every household should have a practical emergency plan adapted to its location and needs.

Basic preparation includes:

- Identifying local hazards
- Signing up for emergency alerts
- Making a family communication plan
- Knowing evacuation routes
- Preparing essential supplies
- Planning for medications and medical equipment
- Keeping important documents protected
- Preparing for pets and livestock
- Maintaining backup charging options
- Knowing how to turn off utilities when necessary
- Checking on neighbors who may need help

TDEM advises Texans to build a kit, make a plan, stay informed, and know evacuation and travel information.

Why It Matters

First responders may not be able to reach everyone immediately during a widespread emergency. Household preparation can reduce danger and allow limited resources to reach those in greatest need.



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16. Why are emergency communications important?

Answer

During a crisis, people need timely, accurate, and understandable information about:

- The nature and location of the danger
- Whether to evacuate or shelter in place
- Road and weather conditions
- Shelter locations
- Utility outages
- Public-health risks
- Where to obtain food, water, medical help, and recovery assistance

Messages should be accessible to people with disabilities, available in commonly used languages, and distributed through multiple channels because any single communication system may fail.

Why It Matters

Conflicting, delayed, or inaccurate information can increase fear and place residents and responders at greater risk.

17. What roles do healthcare and mental-health systems play in public safety?

Answer

Healthcare systems support public safety through emergency medicine, trauma care, ambulance services, behavioral-health treatment, crisis response, and long-term recovery.



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Mental-health and substance-use services may help prevent crises, support people in distress, and give law enforcement and families alternatives when a situation is primarily medical rather than criminal.

Effective systems may include:

- Crisis hotlines
- Mobile crisis teams
- Trained dispatchers
- Crisis-intervention training
- Treatment and follow-up care
- Coordination among healthcare providers and public-safety agencies

Why It Matters

Public safety depends on more than law enforcement alone. Understanding how healthcare, mental-health services, emergency responders, and community organizations work together helps Texans evaluate public safety strategies, understand the choices before their communities, and **vote with confidence**.

18. How should public-safety programs be evaluated?

Answer

Public-safety investments should be evaluated by measurable results, not simply by how much money is spent.

Useful measures may include:

- Emergency response times
- Crime and injury trends
- Case-clearance rates



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- Fire and medical outcomes
- Disaster warning times
- Evacuation effectiveness
- Reliability of emergency communications
- Community trust
- Responder staffing and retention
- Recovery times
- Preventable deaths and injuries
- After-action findings and corrective improvements

Data should be interpreted carefully because population growth, reporting practices, geography, and the type of emergency can affect comparisons.

Why It Matters

Evaluating public safety programs by measurable outcomes helps Texans understand what is working, identify areas for improvement, and ensure public resources are used effectively. Understanding these measures also helps citizens ask informed questions, evaluate public safety policies and leadership, and **vote with confidence**.

19. Who do I need to speak to about community safety?

Answer

Vote with Confidence



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Safe communities are built through thoughtful planning, responsible citizenship, effective public safety systems, and informed public policy.

As you evaluate candidates, public officials, or policy proposals, consider asking questions such as:

Public Safety

- How will this proposal make our communities safer?
- What evidence supports its effectiveness?
- How will success be measured?

Responsible Firearm Ownership

- How does this proposal protect the constitutional rights of responsible firearm owners?
- How does it encourage safe, responsible firearm ownership?
- What role should firearm safety education and safe storage play in preventing accidents?
- How does it balance individual rights with community safety?

Law Enforcement

- How will law enforcement agencies be equipped, trained, and supported to serve growing communities?
- How will accountability, transparency, and public trust be maintained?
- How will agencies work with schools, healthcare providers, emergency managers, and community organizations?

Disaster Preparedness

- Is Texas making sufficient investments in emergency communications, evacuation planning, and disaster response?
- How prepared are our communities for hurricanes, floods, wildfires, tornadoes, winter storms, and other emergencies?
- How will vulnerable populations be protected during disasters?



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Healthcare & Mental Health

- What role do healthcare and mental health services play in improving public safety?
- How will people experiencing a mental health crisis receive timely and appropriate care?
- How can communities strengthen prevention as well as emergency response?

Measuring Success

- How will leaders know whether public safety investments are working?
- What outcomes should Texans expect?
- What are the costs, benefits, and tradeoffs of different approaches?

There are many ways to strengthen public safety. Reasonable people may support different approaches. Understanding the evidence, asking thoughtful questions, and considering the tradeoffs can help Texans evaluate policies and candidates based on the outcomes they hope to achieve.

Texas Matters Takeaway

Public safety is about more than responding to emergencies—it is about preparing for them, preventing them when possible, and building resilient communities where people can live, work, and thrive.

Whether discussing responsible firearm ownership, law enforcement, disaster preparedness, emergency communications, or healthcare, Texans share a common goal: creating safe communities while protecting individual rights and strengthening the resilience of our state.

By understanding the issues, exploring the choices, and asking thoughtful questions, every Texan can participate confidently in shaping the future of public safety.



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Explore what matters most to everyday Texans.
Understand the choices.
Vote with confidence.

Trusted Resources

- [Texas Division of Emergency Management](#)
 - [Texas Department of Public Safety](#)
 - [Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Hunter Education](#)
 - Local police, sheriff, fire, and emergency-management offices
 - County and municipal emergency-alert systems
 - [National Weather Service](#)
 - [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#)
 - Local public-health departments
 - [Recognized disaster-relief and volunteer organizations](#)
-