The City of Garland has a team of people who help the entire organization prepare for emergency scenarios. The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) staffers are sometimes called “professional paranoids,” but their job is to identify, prepare for, and manage recovery from the emergency situations that impact our community. Such preparation is critical for any efforts to grow Garland so that the City will be ready to conduct business and support the community in response to any crisis.

The OEM develops comprehensive disaster response plans, utilizes public notification systems, such as CodeRED and the outdoor warning siren system to provide emergency warnings, and maintains the City of Garland Emergency Operations Center (EOC). OEM staff also conduct public education events to help citizens and businesses learn about personal emergency preparedness.

But with only three staff members, the OEM doesn’t work alone. It’s all about collaboration and partnerships. “This is the single most important part of our job,” says Emergency Management Coordinator Mollie Rivas. “By definition, we will never be able to effectively respond to a disaster alone, since a disaster is defined by ‘exceeding our ability to respond effectively.’ We can only succeed through collaboration, planning, and exercising with our partners inside the organization, within the community and beyond.” (See page on article 9 to learn about the importance of the City’s partnership with RACES.)

Mr. Rivas, along with Senior Emergency Management Specialist Sarahann Martin and Jordan Kelly, monitors and develops strategies to address potential hazards and threats ranging from weather to disease to man-made disasters. Such threats range from tornadoes and lightning to disease to man-made disasters. Such threats range from tornadoes and lightning to a biological threat.

While the Garland RACES is vital to the City’s disaster response efforts, they also play an essential role in the community during non-disaster events. They are responsible for coordinating the lighting of the tree during the City’s annual Christmas on the Square event and provide crucial information-gathering expertise during Fourth of July celebrations. They do not limit themselves to the borders of Garland, either. Each year, representatives participate with their counterparts in the neighboring jurisdictions to support large regional events such as the Dallas Marathon, the March of Dimes Walk and the Multiple Sclerosis Bike Ride.

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