

 Amateur radio operators aid flood relief effort

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News

Community

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KARS radio operators Greg Collins, left, Devin Van Volkenburg, Mark Chapman, Jim Nelson and Gavin Bromfield gather at the Sisterdale VFD Net Control Station.

Source: Photo courtesy of Jerry Cornell

BOERNE — In the early hours of Friday, Kerr County suffered catastrophic flooding when the waters of the Guadalupe River swelled to 30 feet above normal levels. Homes, businesses, cabins, campgrounds and many youth camps along the river were swept away.

By early-morning the Kendall County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was activated and reached out to members of the Kendall Amateur Radio Society (KARS) for assistance.

KARS is a Texas nonprofit corporation organized and operated to advance the knowledge of amateur radio service in Kendall County, and to support the city of Boerne, Kendall and surrounding counties with emergency radio communications.

KARS has developed a close relationship with county and city officials through past events; the October 2023 and April 2024 eclipses, and the 2025 ARRL Field Day, an event held only six days prior to this incident.

The Kendall County EOC requested the radio operators activate their amateur radio net for any flooding-related observations occurring in the area. The KARS local repeater net was activated and members reported flood observations, which were then forwarded to the EOC. July 5 saw the EOC develop a plan to have the amateur radio operators paired with various search and rescue/recovery teams, providing emergency communications support. The team began their efforts the following morning at the Kerr/Kendall County line by operating out of the Comfort Volunteer Fire Department.

Sunday saw more than 100 search and rescue teams, firefighters, cadaver dog teams and KARS members report to the Comfort station. Following a briefing, teams were put together, radio operators were assigned and the teams proceeded to their designated search areas.

KARS radio operators would report back using Handie-Talkies (HTs), via a KARS local repeater, to KARS Net Control which was located at the Comfort VFD. Information was passed on, such as position reports, items found, any additional support needed and when the team was returning to base.

Over the next five days, SAR teams, firefighters, cadaver dog teams and KARS members along with many volunteer amateur radio operators from several surrounding counties, continued these daily routines.

On Friday, July 11, KARS was notified the EOC operations were shutting down and being taken over by state and federal assets.

The Kendall Amateur Radio Society would like to thank Kendall County officials for having faith in their ability to be a positive asset with this terrible disaster. It also issued thanks to the 45 volunteer amateur radio operators from across Texas tat showed up to assist KARS during the tragedy.

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County lifts burn ban outside of Guadalupe's reach

JEFF B. FLINN
Managing Editor

Kendall County Emergency Management officials Tuesday lifted its burn ban for most of the county excluding property along the Guadalupe River and flood-affected areas.

Brady Constantine, county fire marshal and director of the Kendall County Office of Emergency Management, Monday said the burn ban would be lifted for the first time since July 8, when the Kendall County Commissioners Court unanimously imposed the

countywide ban.

The order, issued at 5 a.m., became effective "one hour after sunrise" Tuesday. It allows burning outside the "affected area," which is land between the high-water marks of both banks of the Guadalupe River, to specifically include the river, the riverbed — "the entire Guadalupe River Floodway," it stated.

"It is hereby ordered that ... outdoor burning in unaffected areas is authorized for onsite burning of trees, brush, grass, leaves, branch trimmings or other plant growth by the owner of the property or

any other person authorized by the owner," the decree states.

The burn ban, thus, will remain in effect for riverfront property and areas directly affected by the flood and resulting debris piles.

County Judge Shane Stolarczyk suggested the ban at the county's July 8 meeting, its first after the devastating flood. County Precinct 2 Commissioner Andrea Wisian asked if it could be limited to two weeks, allowing the commissioners to revisit the ban at their next meeting.

At that July 22 meeting, Constantine informed commissioners the county was in line for debris

management funding, to help cover the cost of clean-up. Stolarczyk said the state emphasized the burn ban was "a critical aspect" in order to receive the relief Constantine described.

"I don't have all the logistics of that yet," Constantine said on July 22, "but I can tell you they have asked that we keep the burn ban on."

That has now been rescinded countywide for landowners who have waited patiently for more than a month, since the July 4 weekend flooding.

At their latest press conference,

Stolarczyk and Constantine said clean-up will take at least eight to 10 weeks.

Specifics of Tuesday's issued burn ban:

- No burning when wind is below 6 mph or above 23 mph.
- No burning during low-level temperature inversions.
- All fires must be extinguished by sunset.
- No burning of treated lumber, plastics, insulation, demolition materials or hazardous waste.

Violations are a Class C misdemeanor punishable by fines up to \$500.

A splash of green, a dash of yellow ...

Steven Bray, left, Claire Daxson and Chelsea Meyer of Boerne show the results of their participation in the Patrick Neath Public Library's "Festival Of Colors" held July 26, wrapping up the library's summer events prior to the start of school. Dozens took part in the festival, inspired by the joyful Indian celebration of Holi.

Star photo by Jonathan R. Mallard



Fair Oaks police collar suspected auto thieves

Officers checking links to other cases

JEFF B. FLINN
Managing Editor

FAIR OAKS RANCH — A homeowner's tip helped police nab two suspected auto thieves after a high-speed chase ended with a stolen car crashing into a utility pole on the Interstate 10 West access road.

Officers said the arrests may yield more details on the thefts of as many as four vehicles taken during the early morning hours in the Fairways and Cibola Trails neighborhoods.

"We believe that a couple cars drove in with multiple people in them," Police Chief Todd Smith said Tuesday. "We feel they pretty much drive down the street looking for cars with their doors unlocked."

All four autos taken overnight were located and returned to their owners, according to investigators. The department received numerous reports from residents regarding overnight criminal activity.

See **THIEVES**, page 3

ESD 4 welcomes new trucks with time-honored 'push' tradition



Bexar County Emergency Services District No. 4 firefighters and family members push one of two new fire engines into the ESD 4 station Monday.

Star photo by Veronica Rector

VERONICA RECTOR
Staff Writer

Bexar County Emergency Service District No. 4 welcomed two new fire engines to their ranks. To celebrate their new equipment, ESD 4 hosted a "push-in" ceremony Monday, where firefighters and their families came together to push the new engines into their new homes.

According to ESD

4 officials, the tradition of pushing in new fire engines originated from the horse-drawn fire engines era.

When engines would return from their use, the firefighters would detach the horses and push the engines back into the station. Eventually, the push-in became a time-honored tradition to welcome new engines into service.

See **PUSH**, page 3

Police chief: Exercise safety measures as school year commences

As summer comes to a close and a new school year approaches, it is important for everyone in our community to refocus on safety.

First, I want to take a moment to thank every teacher, administrator and staff member for your unwavering dedication.

Here is how you can help prepare for a safe start to the year:

As drivers, it's crucial to be extra cautious in school zones even before the first day of school.



Slow down, stay alert and watch for children near crosswalks and campuses.

During back-to-school shopping, keep your phone away while driving and don't leave valuable

items visible in your car. Lock your vehicle and keep purchases out of sight.

Parents, please take a moment to talk to your children about safety as they prepare to return to school. Remind your kids not to talk to strangers and to report any suspicious activity to a trusted adult. Plan and practice the safest route to school with your children.

If your children are going to be taking the bus, teach them the

importance of staying seated on the bus and being cautious around bus stops.

As we head into the first few days and weeks of school, let us also be kind to one another. There will be traffic congestion, especially around campuses. Officers will be doing their best to be present at schools, monitor traffic and respond to calls.

Give yourself extra time, exercise patience and try to avoid

school zones during peak drop-off and pick-up times if you do not need to be there. Alternate routes can help ease the congestion for everyone.

Let's all do our part to ensure a safe and smooth start for our students. By following these tips and staying aware, we can help create a secure environment for everyone in our community.

Here's to a safe and successful school year.

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Geneva grad Jace Huiett places second at Texas Junior Amateur. See Page 5

BOERNE BREW

Tune in to Boerne Radio 103.9 FM at 8 a.m. each Saturday to catch "The Boerne Brew." This week, Boerne Star Managing Editor Jeff B. Flinn sits with Boerne ISD's Maggie Dominguez to discuss the coming school year and what parents need to know. That's the Boerne Brew, 8 a.m. Saturday on Boerne Radio 103.9 FM.

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