LOCAL GOVERNMENT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

(As of October 9, 2013)

1. Can 2-1-1 provide the information of individuals registered in my City?

   No, 2-1-1 cannot provide you information from the registry. The call specialists at 2-1-1 don't have access to the database, only the forms to input the information. To obtain information from the registry, you will need to assign a data custodian and then you will be provided a UserID and Password to access the system. This requirement is for security purposes so that unauthorized individuals cannot obtain personal information on the registrants. A Data Custodian appointment form is located on the TDEM web site at: http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem/stear/local.htm.

2. Who should be the data custodian?

   The data custodian can be any individual the local government decides will be appropriate. Some examples are: EMCs, fire department or law enforcement staff members, health department, and volunteers. A data custodian can be assigned for a single city, several cities, a county or several counties. Some local governments who don't have enough staff members to participate in this program are pooling resources. This is especially helpful for those local governments who have only a few individuals registered.

3. Can there be more than one data custodian?

   Local governments can assign as many data custodians they decide they need. Some data custodians are covering the entire county, other jurisdictions have assigned several. We do require that each data custodian be formally assigned so that they receive their own UserID and Password for the system. This is due to security reasons.

4. Who selects and appoints the Data Custodian?

   The local government leadership should make the decision as to who they will assign as data custodians. The registry contains personal information on registrants and local governments should use caution when assigning a data custodian since they will have access to this information. Appointment must be made by the Judge, Mayor, County Commissioner, City Manager, or an appointed Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC) for the City or County they are being appointed for.

5. What training is available for the selected data custodian?

   TDEM periodically schedules a Data Custodian Training webinars. The training lasts for 1 ½ hours and are listed on PreparingTexas.org. Additionally, the training information is distributed to assigned data custodians as well as your TDEM District Coordinator.

6. How do I register as the data custodian?

   *An appointment form is available on the TDEM web site at:
   http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem/stear/local.htm. The completed form can be mailed, faxed, or e-mailed to TDEM to the address on the form. Once assigned, the data custodian will receive an e-mail from our contractor with their UserID and Password and instructions on how to access the registry.*

7. Can 2-1-1 be the Data Custodian?

   No, 2-1-1 cannot act as a local government data custodian.

8. Can we use a volunteer organization to assist with Data Custodian duties?

   Yes. Many jurisdictions utilize volunteers to assist with data custodian duties and some have assigned a volunteer as the data custodian. The registry contains personal information on registrants and local governments should use caution when assigning a data custodian since they will have access to this information.

9. Can the state geocode registrants for cities and counties?

   Currently, TDEM cannot geocode registrants for local governments. Unfortunately, we don't have access to 9-1-1 information that is needed to geocode.

10. Can cities and counties correct registrations directly into the system? Will they be able to do this in the future?

    Currently, to make changes to the system, data custodians must change the information in the exported spreadsheet and send it back to STEARHelp@csr.utexas.edu. TDEM is working with our contractor to develop the capability for data custodians will be able to make changes and register individuals directly. They will be notified when this is available.

11. Has anyone on the STEAR Committee used the STEAR data for a disaster response?

    Yes, the City of Houston has used the TAR data for past responses. In addition, TDEM used the information housed in the TAR system for Search and Rescue operations before and after Hurricane Ike.

12. What information from STEAR can we share with Volunteer Fire Departments and others who might provide transportation for those registered?

    That depends upon the local government's decision on how they are planning to use the information. If your volunteer Fire Departments assist with evacuation or providing assistance to individuals with needs during a response, then yes, you can provide the information to them. Some local governments provide the information to fire departments, law enforcement agencies and others, and geocode the information so that first responders can use the information for response.

13. Is there a template available to incorporate STEAR into our emergency management plan?

No, there is not currently a template that can be used to incorporate the STEAR into your emergency management plan. Please feel free to speak to your Regional Planner in the TDEM Plans Unit about working with you on incorporating this into your planning documents.

14. Is there a web site where the STEAR information is available?

    Yes, STEAR information can be found on the TDEM web site at:

    For information for the public: http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem/stear/public.htm

    Or

    For information for local governments: http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem/stear/local.htm

15. Will individuals registered in TAR automatically be transferred to the STEAR registry?

    The questions in the TAR system are not the same as the questions in the STEAR registry, so they cannot be automatically moved over. Some Data Custodians are manually moving this information by contacting the individuals in the TAR system, obtaining answers to the new questions and entering this information into the spreadsheet that has been downloaded from the STEAR system. Once completed, they can highlight this information and provide the information to STEARHelp@csr.utexas.edu. They will be happy to assist you with this process.

16. If a jurisdiction chooses not to participate, are residents informed of that decision?

    Currently, there is no plan to notify registrants that the local government is not participating in the program. All forms used for registration, flyers, and 2-1-1 provide disclaimers that inform the registrant that that local governments use the information on the system in different ways and that they should check with the local government to determine how their information is used.

17. What is the level of expectations created by a resident who registers?

    As mentioned above, registrants are provided disclaimers when they register.

18. Can the database be broken down by jurisdictional area and if not, at what level can the information be separated?

    Database information is provided primarily by Zip Code. The information can be exported from the registry database in MS Excel or comma separated value (.csv) format. The MS Excel spreadsheet can be filtered by any column in the document. CSV format is used for importing into databases. Data custodians should review registrants to determine if they fall into their jurisdiction. Once determined, notify STEARHelp@csr.utexas.edu with the information. They will associate those individuals your jurisdiction and disassociate those that don't belong to you.

19. How are registrants removed from the database?

a. *When they can't be contacted or no longer need assistance data custodians will need to notify UT/CSR at* STEARHelp@csr.utexas.edu *to have them removed from the system.*

b. *For Annual Registration. Your registrants will be archived and new registrations will be required. A meeting with Data Custodians and local representatives will be scheduled to determine the best time for the annual registration to begin. The STEAR committee will be meeting in the next few weeks to develop guidelines and recommendations.*