

Metropolitan Transit Authority

Harris County



Texas Department of Transportation

City of Houston

Greater Houston Transportation and Emergency Management Center

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Artee T. Jones - Executive Public Information Officer, Houston TranStar
713-881-3244 or email: ajones3@houstontranstar.org

**HOUSTON TRANSTAR PARTNERS WITH THE HOUSTON
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT, THE WEATHER CHANNEL,
TIME WARNER CABLE AND THE AMERICAN RED CROSS
TO SPONSOR PROJECT SAFESIDE**

“Project Safeside teaches middle and high school students about severe weather events such as hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, extreme heat and other weather related events”

(Houston, Texas) ---- On Friday, October 25, 2002 starting at 9:00 a.m., Houston TranStar, the Transportation and Emergency Management Center for the greater Houston region, will partner with the Houston Independent School District, the Weather Channel, Time Warner Cable and the American Red Cross to sponsor Project Safeside’s hurricane simulation exercise with students from the Houston Independent School District.

The Project Safeside hurricane exercise will take place in the Emergency Operations Center housed at Houston TranStar located at 6922 Old Katy Road. Project Safeside is a national education program that teaches middle and high school students about severe weather events such as hurricanes, floods, extreme heat and tornadoes.

During the exercise students from Sidney Lanier Middle School will form a mock city government, simulate a hurricane disaster, and develop and coordinate a recovery plan. Students participating in the hurricane exercise will be responding to pre-landfall and post landfall hurricane scenarios.

As part of the hurricane exercise students will assume a variety of roles and responsibilities including City Mayor, Director of Emergency Management, Director of Transit Agency, Director of Information Technology, Fire Chief, American Red Cross Director, Salvation Army Director, Energy Company Representative, Public Information Officer, Police Chief and News Reporters from the local media.

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Conducting this hurricane simulation in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), housed at Houston TranStar, will provide participating students the opportunity to gain first-hand exposure to the advanced communications technology of the center, where they will learn how the emergency management representatives from the City of Houston and Harris County prepare for a weather disaster and cope with the damages caused by them.

As a result of this hands-on experience, students will learn about their individual responsibilities and the importance of organized teamwork and project management skills when faced with a dangerous weather event. These simulations are interdisciplinary -- teaching students about science, government, economics and sociology, thus providing them with an opportunity to learn more about a variety of future careers.

According to Jack Whaley, Director of Houston TranStar, "The partners at Houston TranStar have always felt that one of the most valuable tools we can use to disseminate the vital information we collect is community outreach. Project Safeside affords us the unique opportunity to provide students enough knowledge to communicate with their parents the need for an emergency plan in the event of a major weather related event. Since this region is currently in hurricane season and we are observing the increased activity in the Gulf of Mexico, the timing of this exercise could not have been better. "

"The Weather Channel would like to thank our local partners for allowing us to bring the Project Safeside program and mock government hurricane simulation to Houston," said Carolyn Jones, the Weather Channel's Senior Brand Manager, Education Marketing. "A critical part of the learning process is experience, and we know that the Project Safeside activities help stimulate the imagination, heighten retention, and make learning fun. "

"Safety is one of the core values of the Houston Independent School District and is an integral part of our science curriculum," said Janice Arceneaux, Manager of the HISD Science Curriculum Department. Project SafeSide is an integrated resource that provides valuable information on weather patterns, data collection, and severe weather phenomena. The information and activities in Project SafeSide equip students and their families with knowledge to maximize their safety during weather emergencies."

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“Time Warner Cable is pleased to co-sponsor the Project SafeSide emergency preparedness program that provides Houston area middle school students a firsthand opportunity to learn what it takes to prepare our local community for a real-life natural disaster, ” said Ray Purser, Vice President of Public Affairs, TWC-Houston. “In addition to the program’s benefit as a supplement to the school's science curriculum, students acquire knowledge they can take home to share with their families so our entire community is more prepared the next time we are faced with a local disaster such as a hurricane. ”

“Together, we can save a life is the motto of the American Red Cross. This partnership via Project Safeside will do just that,” says Ray Beall, Manager of Program Services for the Greater Houston Area Chapter of the American Red Cross. “The Red Cross is charged with getting life saving information into the hands of the American public. Educating students, and through the students to the parents, on how to be prepared for and respond to a disaster is one extremely important avenue in educating the public.”

Project Safeside programs have been successfully implemented at several Emergency Operations Centers in Florida over the past several years.

For more information on the Project Safeside hurricane exercise, please contact Artee T. Jones, Executive Public Information Officer for Houston TranStar at 713-881-3244 or email: ajones3@houstontranstar.org. For more information on the Project Safeside educational program, please contact Lucien C. Proby, III at 305-670-0323.

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Houston TranStar is a partnership comprised of the City of Houston, Harris County, METRO and the State of Texas that is responsible for coordinating the planning, design and operations of Transportation and Emergency Management functions for the greater Houston region. For more information on the Houston TranStar partnership, please visit www.houstontranstar.org.

Houston Independent School District is the largest public school system in Texas and the seventh largest in the United States. HISD schools are dedicated to giving every student the best possible education through an intensive core curriculum and specialized, challenging instructional and career programs. For more information on the Houston Independent School District, please visit www.houstonisd.org.

Since 1982, **The Weather Channel** has brought timely weather information to the world. Beginning as a 24-hour, 7-day television network devoted entirely to weather, it has expanded across several mediums to bring breaking weather news to its viewers and users. For more information on The Weather Channel, please visit www.weather.com.

Time Warner Cable (TWC) is Houston’s leading cable communications company with approximately 660,000 customers in the Houston metro area. The company has built its reputation on providing customers with 24-hour local service, a vast variety of entertainment choices including local programming of special interest, and a satisfaction guarantee. TWC has invested approximately \$350 million in its Houston-area network to bring customers state-of-the-art services such as digital cable, high-speed Internet service and HDTV. Time Warner Cable is a division of AOL Time Warner (NYSE: AOL). For more information please visit www.twchouston.com.

The **American Red Cross** is dedicated to saving lives, easing suffering and restoring hope at home and around the world. The American Red Cross mobilized relief to the victims of more than 73,000 disasters nationwide last year alone and has been the primary supplier of lifesaving blood and blood products in the United States for more than 50 years. For more information on the American Red Cross, please visit www.redcross.org.