

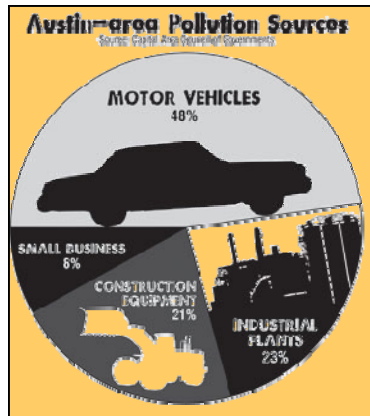
# CAPCOG CONNECTIONS



A PUBLICATION OF THE CAPITAL AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

## The “Big Push” Striving for Attainment of EPA Ground-Level Ozone Standard in 2009

2009 is shaping up to be a very important year for air quality in the Capital Region. If monitored levels of ground-level ozone during the 2009 ozone season (April 1 - Oct. 31, 2009) decrease, it is possible that the Capital Region could avoid being designated out of compliance with federal air quality standards, and therefore be able to sidestep years of burdensome regulatory requirements that have the potential to limit regional control and add to the cost of doing business.



In March 2008 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) strengthened the National Ambient

Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for ground-level ozone to 75 parts per billion (ppb). The EPA must make their final decision on which areas are in attainment of the new standard by March 2010.

Attainment of the ozone standard is based on an area’s design value, which is a three-year average of the fourth highest monitored ozone levels in a given area. For the Capital Region the monitored ozone levels from 2006-2008 resulted in a design value of 77 ppb which exceeds the EPA standard. However, since the EPA will also consider 2009 monitoring data before making their final determination, there is still an opportunity for the region to be designated in attainment of the standard. If the fourth highest monitored level of ozone does not exceed 77 ppb in 2009, the average from 2007-2009 will be 75 ppb, which would result in attainment of the ozone NAAQS standard.

(see *BIG PUSH*, p. 4)

## CAPCOG Looks at Changes in Bylaws

CAPCOG will hold a special General Assembly meeting on April 8, 2009 in conjunction with the regular monthly meeting of the Executive Committee to vote on amendments to its bylaws regarding membership of the Executive Committee. A study group composed of Executive Committee members and General Assembly members will meet during the first week of February to consider the possible restructuring of membership to ensure representation by small and large jurisdictions as well as geographic distribution of members while also considering dedicated slots to jurisdictions of a specific size.

The need for this review arose when the most recent Census estimates showed two cities, San Marcos and Cedar Park, crossing the 50,000 population mark joining Austin and Round Rock. The bylaws provide an automatic slot on the Executive Committee to cities of 50,000 and over; however, they also cap the total membership at 21, so adding these slots would surpass that number.

At CAPCOG’s annual December meeting, the General Assembly voted to postpone adding the two slots. While there was no opposition to giving these cities representation, and the San Marcos mayor already fills another slot, concern was voiced that slots tied to growth may cause the board to keep getting larger, so longer term impact of the bylaws should be considered.

CAPCOG staff is researching how (see *BYLAWS*, p. 4)

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## New Deputy Director Named

CAPCOG Executive Director Betty Voights has announced the appointment of Sheila Jennings as the agency's new Deputy Director, effective Jan. 12th.

Jennings was formerly Associate Director of the Texas Association of Regional Councils and brings a wealth of experience to this position including extensive administrative knowledge and experience with local, regional, and state governments. Over the past year, Ms. Jennings has been Assistant Director of the Homeland Security Division at CAPCOG.

Jennings replaced Clay Collins who had been with CAPCOG since 1997, first as Finance Director and subsequently as the Deputy Director. Collins left in early January to accept a position with the City of Sunset Valley as its first full-time city administrator.

All administrative functions of the agency including budget and audit, contracts, compliance, building management, and communications will be overseen by Jennings.

"We are pleased that Sheila has decided to expand her duties here; she has more experience with regional government than anyone on our staff!" noted Voights.



*Sheila Jennings, CAPCOG's new Deputy Director*

## Basic Peace Officer Course Starting Soon

## Area Hospitals Participate in Regional Exercise

Nine area hospitals (St. David's Medical Center, St. David's South Austin Medical Center, St. David's North Austin Medical Center, St. David's Round Rock, St. David's Georgetown Hospital, Austin Surgical Hospital, Heart Hospital of Austin, Northwest Hills Surgical Hospital, and Llano Memorial Hospital) participated in a regionally-planned exercise in Dec. 2008. The goal for the exercise was to conduct a regional drill by creating objectives and testing around the hospitals' 96-hour emergency sustainability requirements as established by The Joint Commission, the accrediting body for the healthcare organizations in the United States.

The main component in the scenario included a bomb explosion that affected the infrastructure of St. David's Medical Center causing patients to be transferred to other facilities. The scenario also tested the incident command structure, water and ventilation systems, surge capacity, facility lockdown and security, emergency physician credentialing, internal hospital call down notification, and emergency communications and interoperability at each of the nine hospitals. A decontamination event was conducted at St. David's Georgetown Hospital.

The exercise took into assumption that the Seton Network Hospitals were filled with hurricane-evacuated patients.

Overall, the regional exercise was planned and executed without significant variations to the plan. A significant outcome of this drill was the amount of unity and dedication of the regional drill planning team, including the staff from various hospitals, local health departments, and other agencies that also acted as Controller/Evaluators. This was truly a regionally-developed exercise and broke ground on many new concepts to be explored. Also, a key component in this event was the use of the regional interoperability 800MHz radio system that was rolled out as a Capital Area Trauma Regional Advisory Council project. This system provides a level of communication for hospitals and other agencies that need to communicate with hospitals during a disaster. Another positive outcome included the use of amateur radio operators at the hospitals in sending information and testing the equipment that was installed at all of the hospitals. The development of the (see *HOSPITALS*, p. 4)

The new TCLEOSE basic peace officer course is now in place and will be taught in the next Basic Peace Officer Course at CAPCOG's Regional Training Academy (RTA). The next BPOC class begins Feb. 2, 2009 with Williamson County Sheriff's Office as the host agency. The BPOC Class #52 has 39 students which is a bit above the average class size, according to RTA Director Mike Jennings, particularly since it is a night course. It is a nine-month long class and the cadets will receive all of the mandated training curriculum required by TCLEOSE to become a licensed peace officer.

With this class starting in Feb., the RTA will have three basic peace officer courses running simultaneously for the first time in academy history. There has never been more than two, according to CAPCOG Executive Director Betty Voights, adding that the RTA is committed to running the number of classes needed by the local governments served to ensure enough officers are trained.

TCLEOSE has posted the 2008 1<sup>st</sup> attempt pass rate for the state testing, and the RTA has a 98.6% first-attempt pass rate. (See *BPOC*, p. 4)

# United States<sup>®</sup> Census 2010

Williamson County Judge Dan A. Gattis and Georgetown Mayor George Garver were among the numerous officials and community leaders on hand during the recent open house of the Williamson County Local Census Office.

The opening of the Census Office launches the Census Bureau's effort to recruit hundreds of employees needed to complete an accurate count of the Capital Area communities for Census 2010. The open house was held at 3010 Williams Drive, Suite 144, Georgetown, TX.

The Williamson County Early Local Census Office is the first of several field offices in the Capital Area region that will be established to assist with census. The field offices will conduct critical operations such as hiring temporary workers and sending enumerators to housing units that fail to return the questionnaire by Census Day on April 1, 2010.

The 2010 questionnaire is one of the shortest ever, including only 10 questions collecting basic information such as age, race, and housing tenure. The Census Bureau also collects socioeconomic and other information monthly from small samples of the population through the American Community Survey (ACS). Census data is used to determine congressional representation and allocate

over \$300 billion in federal funds nationwide each year.

With the rapid growth that the Capital Area has seen over the past few years, it is important to make Census 2010 a community effort to ensure those new residents are counted. If you would like additional information, please call the Williamson County Early Local Census Office at 512-942-6190. For information about census jobs, call 1-866-861-2010.



Helping cut the ribbon during the open house are: (left to right) Gabe Sanchez, Regional Director, Census Bureau; Georgetown Mayor George Garver; Williamson County Judge Dan A. Gattis; and Mel Pendland, President of the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce.

## Capital Area Region Seeing Some Increase in Unemployment

Unemployment rates are continuing to rise in the Capital Area region. According to data released by the Texas Workforce Commission on Jan. 23<sup>rd</sup>, unemployment in December in the Capital Area ranged from 3.8% in Fayette County to 6.0% in Caldwell County. Unemployment increased in all ten counties compared to Dec. 2007, with the largest increase recorded in Williamson County (3.7% to 5.7%). Unemployment in most of the Capital Area is still well below state and national averages. Unemployment in Texas in December was 6.0%.

For more information, please visit the Texas Workforce Commission website at <http://www.tracer2.com>.

### Unemployment in the Capital Area December 2008

	Dec-08	Dec-07
Caldwell County	6.0	4.1
Bastrop County	5.7	3.8
Williamson County	5.7	3.7
Llano County	5.4	3.9
Travis County	5.0	3.5
Hays County	4.9	3.7
Lee County	4.6	3.5
Burnet County	4.5	3.3
Blanco County	4.0	3.2
Fayette County	3.8	3.0

**BIG PUSH** (cont'd from p. 1) The time sensitive nature of this year's ozone season has encouraged CAPCOG, along with other regional air quality partners, to make a "Big Push" for compliance in 2009. Planning is currently underway to develop a strategy for obtaining maximum emission reduction in the 2009 ozone season. This planning effort will include maximizing effectiveness of public outreach, accelerating the components of the region's current air quality plan (8-hour Ozone Flex Program), and evaluating new emission reduction measures that can reasonably be implemented in the region for this upcoming ozone season. An unprecedented level of regional effort will be necessary in order to succeed in this endeavor. CAPCOG will work with the region through the Clean Air Coalition to continue to enlist local government assistance in achieving the goal of attainment in 2009.

For more information on the "Big Push" and other air quality programs in the Capital Region, contact Bill Gill, Air Quality Program Coordinator, at [bgill@capcog.org](mailto:bgill@capcog.org), or 512.916.6066.

**BYLAWS** (cont'd from p. 1) other COGs select their governing boards; preliminary information gathered has indicated a very wide range of practices with regard to who serves, the selection process, and the size.

Deputy Director Sheila Jennings, who is heading up the research, discovered that the North Central Texas COG (DFW region) has 13 on its governing board while Coastal Bend COG (Corpus region) has 73; the average board size is 28.

The study group will work toward making recommendations in time for the March 11<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee meeting. The General Assembly meeting will be held at 9 a.m. at CAPCOG prior to the Executive Committee meeting.

**BPOC** (cont'd from p. 2) CAPCOG Regional Training Academy is now offering a basic jailers course to be held in the evenings. The next date for this course will be posted on the training calendar at [www.capcog.org](http://www.capcog.org). During February, the RTA in-service will be conducting numerous required TCLEOSE classes throughout our region; please check our web site for details.

**HOSPITALS** (cont'd from p. 3) exercise evaluation tool created for the exercise will be used as a guide for future regional exercises.

The exercise subcommittee of the Capital Area Public Health and Medical Preparedness Coalition (CAPHMPC) will use the lessons learned and the improvement action plan to begin preparing for the 2009 regional exercise. The CAPHMPC is a collaborative forum of several related efforts by the Travis County/City of Austin Office of Emergency Management, Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG), Capital Area Trauma Regional Advisory Council (CATRAC), and Austin/Travis County Health & Human Services (ATCHHS) with a regional focus on preparedness and response planning.

For more information about this exercise or the CAPHMPC, contact Robin Wiatrek at 512-916-6014 or [rwiatrek@capcog.org](mailto:rwiatrek@capcog.org).

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