

Houston, Corpus Christi Cemeteries Host Rebuilding Workshops After Harvey Topples Headstones

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AUSTIN, Texas – Hurricane Harvey damaged more than just homes, roads and bridges in 2017 – the storm impacted historic and cultural resources as well, including many hundreds of cemeteries and gravestones across Texas.

At Houston's Olivewood Cemetery and Corpus Christi's Old Bayview Cemetery, headstones and grave markers were broken, toppled and soiled from falling limbs broken loose by Harvey. Trees and landscaping were damaged by high winds and standing water.

In order to help restore these culturally significant sites, and to build capacity against future disasters, FEMA's Interagency Recovery Coordination (IRC) group helped organize cemetery restoration workshops aimed at training Texans on cemetery restoration and maintenance.

"The workshops will go a long way not just for disaster preparedness and response, but for preservation efforts in general," said Carlyn Hammons of the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Cemetery Preservation Program.

Presentations included information and activities on disaster preparedness plans, fixing landscape damage, vegetation removal and stone monument cleaning and repair.



In all, 64 municipal city planners, cemetery managers, church sextons, cemetery grounds workers and family members attended the workshops.

There are about 50,000 cemeteries, large and small, across the state of Texas. Most of these sites don't get the maintenance and attention they deserve, said THC Cemetery Program Director Jenny McWilliams. "Training like this is valuable, especially regarding preparedness. It's good to get folks thinking ahead."

IRC is comprised of FEMA's National Disaster Recovery Support cadre and other federal agencies. The group facilitates long-term recovery from Hurricane Harvey in coordination with local, state and federal partners.

For more information on Hurricane Harvey and Texas recovery, visit the Hurricane Harvey disaster web page at www.fema.gov/disaster/4332, or Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/FEMAharvey>, the FEMA Region 6 Twitter account at twitter.com/FEMARegion6, or the Texas Division of Emergency Management website at <https://www.dps.texas.gov/dem/>.

