



Texas Department of Public Safety

Information for the News Media

Media Relations Office

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Jack Colley, 1948 - 2010

Jack Colley, head of the DPS Texas Division of Emergency Management, died on May 16. Colley, 62, suffered a heart attack in early May.

“Jack Colley was a valuable member of the Texas Department of Public Safety and a national icon in the profession of Emergency Management,” said Steve McCraw, director of the DPS. “Jack was a great Texan, and our thoughts and prayers are with his family during this difficult time.”

At the state’s first-ever Texas Hurricane Conference in 2003, Colley summed up the philosophy that guided him during the many catastrophic events he oversaw on behalf of the State of Texas: “In disaster, the most important thing for you to know is that you are not alone.”

During his 12-plus years with the DPS, Colley was involved in the response and recovery to many of Texas’ largest incidents, disasters and emergencies, including the Space Shuttle Columbia crash (2003) and Hurricane Rita (2005) and Hurricane Ike (2008).

Colley coordinated the effort to shelter thousands of Katrina evacuees in 2005 and then led the monumental evacuation of more than 3 million Texas residents as Hurricane Rita threatened the southeast Texas coast only weeks later.

In 2008, the Texas Division of Emergency Management responded to six hurricanes and tropical storms within a 90-day period. These storms included Hurricane Dolly, which devastated the Lower Rio Grande Valley July 23 and Hurricane Ike, which washed over Galveston and the southeast Texas coast on Sept. 13.

Under Colley's guidance, Texas led the nation in a number of initiatives to make disaster response "quicker, faster, smarter," which included work on systems to improve tracking of special needs evacuees and improved processes for safe re-entry of evacuees after the storm.

Over the past year, DEM has focused on Re-Entry Task Forces to bring back security, restore infrastructure, provide mass care and start recovery within the first 72 hours after a storm. In an effort to speed deployment of resources to states struck by mega-disasters, Colley pushed for an Interstate Emergency Response Support Plan (IERSP) with Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico and Oklahoma – the first of its kind in the nation.

"In times of crisis, Texas depended on Jack Colley for leadership and he rose to the occasion each and every time. That leadership will be sorely missed," said Allan B. Polunsky, chairman of the Texas Public Safety Commission.

In the wake of Katrina in 2005, as it was learned that many people declined to evacuate if they could not bring their family pets, Colley began efforts to open evacuation and sheltering operations in Texas to include companion animals.

"A lot of jokes are made about it but it is simply not a joke. Nobody dies because they can't bring their pet. This is Texas," Colley once said.

Colley also served as the Assistant Director of the Texas Office of Homeland Security and was the State Administrative Agent for all Federal Homeland Security Programs within Texas. Colley was a member of the Governor's Homeland Security Council, the First Responder Advisory Council and the Critical Infrastructure and Key Resource Protection Council. He was chair of the Texas Drought Preparedness Council.

Colley served in the U.S. Army from 1970 to 1997, retiring as a Colonel before joining DPS. He served in several positions of significant responsibility, including Chief Operations Officer for the Second Brigade and Headquarters, 1st Cavalry Division and Division Chief for Strategic Planning for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Department of Defense. Colley was a graduate of the U. S. Army War College and the Command and General Staff College. Colley earned a bachelor's degree from East Texas State University in Commerce and a master's in business from Abilene Christian University.

Funeral arrangements are pending.

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