

Contact

For Immediate Release

Mark Hanna
(512) 326-7616

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Hailstorms, Heat and Wildfires Mark a Rough Year in 2011

El Paso, Bastrop, Abilene and Robstown experienced catastrophic conditions last year and thankfully, insurance companies were quickly on the scene to help out. Each city witnessed millions of dollars in damage from violent weather to wildfires.

In the early hours of January 11 a line of thunderstorms continued to grow during a storm that swept through portions of south Texas. The storm began building near Laredo and moved eastward lashing residents of Alice with strong winds and hail. The storm strengthened causing more damage as it moved across Robstown and into Corpus Christi. Insured losses were estimated at \$100 million to homes, businesses and vehicles.

A brutal cold front hit the city of El Paso on February 2, plummeting temperatures to near zero. The freezing temperatures resulted in bursting water pipes in residences, businesses and water mains throughout the city.

“What stood out was the duration of the cold weather which set an all time record low maximum where the temperature did not rise above 18 degrees for two days,” said John Fausett, warning coordination meteorologist for the National Weather Service Office in Santa Teresa, New Mexico. “El Paso also experienced rolling black-outs as thousands of residents were without heat for hours at a time.”

In April, three separate storm systems moved through the Dallas Fort Worth area causing wide-spread damage. Each storm spawned tornados, large hail and hurricane force winds resulting in damage from Denton to Hillsboro.

On April 24, the costliest hailstorm in Abilene’s history occurred when softball size hail fell. More than 8,000 homes required new roofs and hundreds of cars wound up in auto repair shops requiring body work and new windshields.

Areas of Texas not hit by rains in April began seeing wildfires. Six of the top 10 largest fires in Texas history all occurred in April. The largest fire occurred near the Big Bend in Fort Davis County where more than 300,000 acres burned and 41 homes were destroyed. The fire near Possum Kingdom Lake burned more than 100,000 acres and destroyed 168 homes. Many of these homes were insured for more than \$1 million.

The costliest wildfire in Texas history erupted on Labor Day weekend in Bastrop County. The result was the loss of two lives and 1,600 homes destroyed by fire. Insured losses were set at \$325 million.

The summer of 2011 will be remembered for its triple digit temperatures occurring over a record number of days. Lake levels fell rapidly preventing many people from taking advantage of personal recreation on the water. Water restrictions, burn bans and loss of crops and yards were the norm. The majority of Texas ranchers reduced their herds of cattle because of the lack of water and increasing cost for feed. Texans who tried to beat the heat by staying inside felt the cost in the form of higher utility bills.

“Unfortunately the drought in Texas continues and so do the wildfires,” said Mark Hanna, a spokesman for the Insurance Council of Texas. “2011 was by far the costliest year for wildfires in Texas and an above average year for damaging storms. We can only hope that much needed rainfall is on its way and the destructive storms are kept to a minimum.”

The Insurance Council of Texas is the largest state insurance trade association in the country consisting of approximately 500 property and casualty insurers writing business in Texas. For more information click on www.insurancecouncil.org or <http://www.facebook.com/insurancecounciloftexas>

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