from the President



This month marks the mid-point of the 2003 Gulf Coast hurricane season. History shows that during this time, severe storms pelt this geographic region, sometimes causing major damage to cities that lie in their paths. Often the major streams and the tributaries that feed them cannot handle the excess storm water and flooding will occur. The Texas Medical Center, and many other parts of the city, experienced this type of disaster when Tropical Storm Allison hit town in 2001.

To reduce the chance of flood damage from any future storms, the Harris County Flood Control District, in conjunction with the Army Corps of Engineers, is getting ready to make some major changes to the Brays Bayou watershed. The 31 miles of Brays Bayou and the land it encompasses pass right near the Texas Medical Center area, as well as by thousands of other residential and business structures. When Project Brays is complete, about 30,000 structures will no longer lie within the 100-year flood plain, and the Texas Medical Center can expect, at most, flood-reduction depths of 4 to 4.5 feet.

Components of Project Brays include constructing a couple of detention basins, channel improvements and bridge modifications or replacements. The detention basins, located both upstream and downstream, are a crucial part of the project, as they will greatly benefit the Texas Medical Center area. They will alter the timing of the bayou's water flow, keeping the bayou's water level from rising too much and too quickly.

The channel improvements and bridge construction, located in the downstream portion of the project, are not slated for completion until 2014. However, since these improvements lie right near the TMC's backyard, the benefits will be felt as soon as they are made. Construction is scheduled to begin on these projects this fall. The bridge construction may affect TMC traffic, but the flood control district will minimize the traffic issues by spacing out the construction, not concurrently working on two adjacent bridges. The bridges that may affect traffic flow are Almeda, Ardmore, Force Main, Greenbriar, Holcombe, Kirby, North Braeswood, South Braeswood, South MacGregor, South Main, and State Highway 288.

One thing is certain, future floods will happen – we can't control nature. But we can take preventive measures, such as Project Brays, to lessen the impact of nature's force.

On another note, for the 14th year, *U.S. News & World Report* has published its rankings of "America's Best Hospitals," and this year, seven TMC hospitals have ranked among the nation's best.

The survey is designed to help patients choose the best possible health care facility for their specific need. The seven TMC hospitals spotlighted this year are just a sampling of the level of unmatched care provided in Houston. The recognized hospitals include Memorial Hermann, The Menninger Clinic, The Methodist Hospital, Texas Children's Hospital, the Texas Heart Institute at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital, The Institute for Rehabilitation and Research, and The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, which topped the list of U.S. cancer hospitals. Several hospitals were recognized in more than one specialty – a true testament to the diversity of their expertise.

These seven institutions are a select group and are to be applauded for their accomplishments, research and uncompromised patient care. It's because of institutions like these that the Texas Medical Center has been called a "city of health." Those who seek care in any of the institutions will benefit from the wisdom and expertise of the physicians and researchers who choose to call the TMC home.

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