

SB 3 Flood Warning Systems — Frequently Asked Questions

Companion to the SB 3 Flood Warning Siren and Bridge Attachment Installation SOP. Where this FAQ and the SOP differ, the SOP governs.

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Getting Started

What information should we gather before contacting TxDOT?

Have the candidate corridor or watershed, preliminary site locations with GPS coordinates, the device type and manufacturer information you are considering, how the system will be powered and communicate, and who will own, operate, and maintain it. For a bridge attachment, also have the Permanent Structure Number, the facility carried, and the feature crossed. Local Government (LG) will need to reach out to District to obtain bridge layout for submittal.

Early coordination with the Area Engineer before you develop detailed plans or lock in final locations is the single best way to avoid rework.

How do we determine which TxDOT district to contact?

Districts are assigned by county. Appendix A of the SOP lists the SB 3 districts (Austin, Brownwood, Laredo, Odessa, San Angelo, San Antonio, and Waco) with their counties and contact information. If a project spans two districts, contact both.

Who is our primary point of contact at TxDOT?

The District is your primary point of coordination. The Area Engineer has been identified as the primary contact for site coordination, and the District Permit Coordinator handles RULIS accounts, support, and permit routing. Division subject matter experts are engaged by the District, not directly by the applicant. Copy the District Engineer when you contact the Area Engineer.

Can a consultant apply on behalf of a county?

Yes, but only as the local government's authorized agent. The local government remains the responsible party and the signatory on TxDOT documents and must hold its consultant accountable. TxDOT requires documentation — such as the local government's resolution — designating which consultant is acting as its agent.

Eligibility and Siting

Can we install a siren in any TxDOT right of way?

No. Each site is evaluated individually. An installation may be denied if it adversely affects roadway operations, maintenance, drainage, roadway safety, sight distance, clear zone, utility operations, programmed transportation projects, or other TxDOT facilities.

TxDOT right of way is also not always the best long-term location. Because the local government carries all cost and responsibility for the life of the installation, including any future relocation, evaluate sites outside TxDOT right of way first.

Can we attach equipment to any bridge?

No. Bridge attachments require mandatory Bridge Division structural review and approval and may be denied if a feasible and reasonable alternative outside the structure exists.

Bridges that overtop frequently are generally poor candidates because equipment is exposed to debris impact, high hydraulic forces, flood damage, higher maintenance, and reduced reliability precisely when the system is needed most.

Are bridge attachments treated differently than siren installations in right of way?

Yes. Both require a site-specific RULIS permit, but a bridge attachment adds a mandatory Bridge Division structural review of the bridge attachment details document and is processed through RULIS.

The bridge attachment details document must be prepared, signed, and sealed by a Professional Engineer licensed in Texas.

Care should be taken when drilling holes in concrete bridge elements to avoid hitting structural steel elements buried within the concrete.

What does Bridge Division look at in its review?

- Conformance with preferred attachment locations and design considerations.
- Structural impacts, attachment details, and equipment loading.
- Bridge inspection accessibility and maintenance impacts.
- Safety considerations and conflicts with future bridge improvements.

Bridge Division may request revisions or additional information, including bridge-specific structural calculations and stress analyses depending on bridge type and the proposed attachment.

What attachment configuration does TxDOT prefer?

- Downstream-side installation.
- Equipment concealed behind the bridge railing.
- Anchoring to the exterior face of concrete rails or barriers where structurally appropriate.
- No attachment extending above the elevation of the bridge rail.
- Minimal impact to inspection, maintenance, and future bridge work.

Alternate configurations may be approved where site conditions warrant.

Applying

Can multiple installations be included in one application?

No. Each installation location requires a separate site-specific RULIS application. One RULIS account, however, can be used across multiple districts and projects.

How long does review take?

The anticipated timeline for a complete, accurate, and thorough application is 20 business days. Actual duration varies with complexity.

- Bridge attachments, structural evaluations, power connections, communications systems, and multi-site projects add review time.
- More required reviewers means more coordination time.
- If the application is returned for additional information, the review clock is suspended until you respond.
- Exception to Policy requests add levels of review beyond the District.

What happens if our design cannot meet a TxDOT requirement?

You may be required to submit an Exception to Policy request in RULIS describing the exception, the technical justification, supporting plans and documentation, and any proposed mitigation. The District decides whether to recommend it; recommended exceptions move through the TxDOT approval chain. Approval is not automatic and is decided case by case on safety, operational impacts, engineering justification, and policy considerations.

Can locations be changed after approval?

Yes, but a changed location requires a new or updated RULIS application and District approval before construction. The revised site is reviewed again for compliance with the Utility Accommodation Rules, clear zone, safety and traffic, drainage, and maintenance access, and bridge-mounted equipment must return to Bridge Division for review.

Can we power or connect our system using TxDOT infrastructure?

No. TxDOT electrical service, ITS power, traffic signal service, roadway lighting circuits, communications and network infrastructure, and monitoring systems may not be used. The local government provides all power and communications, including a backup power source, and documents how long the system will operate during a primary power failure.

Are cameras allowed on flood warning installations?

No. Cameras and image capture capability are not permitted.

Ownership, Operations, and Liability

Who owns the installed equipment?

The local government or system owner retains ownership of all installed sirens, gauges, sensors, communications equipment, power systems, and associated infrastructure. TxDOT does not take ownership at any point, including after permit closeout.

Who is responsible for maintenance?

The local government, for the life of the installation. This includes inspection, testing, monitoring, maintenance, repair, replacement, emergency response, and ultimate removal, and all associated costs.

TxDOT is not the owner or operator, does not maintain the system, and is not responsible for warning system performance.

What happens if maintenance is required after installation?

Coordinate the work with the District and provide traffic control that complies with the TMUTCD and any District conditions. Work only during District-approved hours; nights, weekends, and holidays require prior authorization.

Design and site your installation up front for safe maintenance access — locations that unreasonably restrict future access or expose workers to traffic may not be approved.

What if we need to make an emergency repair?

Emergency work is limited to what is necessary to address an immediate threat to public safety, prevent damage to transportation facilities, or restore system operation. Notify the District's designated contact before beginning work, or as soon as conditions permit, implement compliant traffic control immediately, and submit any required documentation after the work is complete.

What happens if the installation is hit by a vehicle?

The local government is responsible for damage assessment, coordination with TxDOT, public safety response, repair or replacement, and documentation, at its own expense. The same applies to damage from flooding, debris impacts, hydraulic loading, weather, and other natural events.

Future TxDOT Projects

What happens if the road is widened or the bridge is replaced?

The installation is subordinate to future transportation needs. If TxDOT determines that an installation conflicts with a project, maintenance activity, safety improvement, drainage improvement, or operational requirement, the local government must relocate, modify, protect, or remove it at its sole expense.

Approval to occupy TxDOT right of way does not create a vested right to remain there.

How does a relocation work?

- The District Utility Coordinator issues written notice identifying the conflicting project or need, the facilities to be relocated, the required schedule, and District coordination contacts.
- The local government acknowledges receipt and coordinates with the District.
- A new or updated RULIS application is submitted with the purpose "Siren Relocation."
- The District and subject matter experts review the new site; Bridge Division review is required for any bridge-mounted installation.
- Approval is issued before construction begins, and RULIS GIS records are updated when the work is complete.

What records do we have to update after installation or relocation?

Update RULIS with the new GIS location, revised coordinates, current photographs, any change in ownership or contact information, and revised attachments, plans, and supporting documents. Current records support the statewide inventory, reporting, records requests, maintenance coordination, and emergency response.

RULIS and Deadlines

What is RULIS and do we need an account?

RULIS is TxDOT's web-based Right of Way Utility and Leasing Information System, used for permit submittal, review, routing, approval, tracking, and closeout. Yes — every applicant needs an account. Registration and permit-creation job aids, including Spanish-language versions, are published on the TxDOT RULIS training page for external partners. District Permit Coordinators handle account setup, unlocks, password resets, and training questions.

Does TxDOT track our SB 3 grant deadlines?

No. Applicants are responsible for meeting any deadlines, funding conditions, or reporting obligations established by other programs or agencies, including the Texas Water Development Board. TxDOT does not administer non-TxDOT programs and assumes no responsibility for compliance with their requirements. Account for and build permitting, procurement, construction, and testing time into your schedule and coordinate with TxDOT early.