



PRESS RELEASE

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Caldwell County Community and Evacuation Center celebrates grand opening

The Caldwell County Community and Evacuation Center, a 45,000-square foot facility intended to serve a dual purpose as an emergency shelter and an event center, is now open.

The \$22 million facility, paid for largely by grants administered through the Texas General Land Office, offers temporary shelter for up to 360 people displaced by disasters such as wildfires, tornadoes, winter weather events, floods and hurricanes.

“During Hurricane Harvey, residents of Caldwell County seeking shelter had few options,” said Texas Land Commissioner Dawn Buckingham, M.D. “This evacuation center will provide safe haven for residents during future disaster events, increase regional resiliency, and provide opportunities to create a more vibrant community here in Caldwell County. The GLO is committed to investing infrastructure projects that provide sensible solutions and help local leaders build a stronger, more resilient Texas for generations to come.”

The center, which is located at 2947 N. Magnolia Avenue in Luling, is situated on 20 acres easily accessible from US-183 and I-10 and includes a warming kitchen, showers, ample restrooms, providing people with safe, operational accommodations until they can safely return home.

When it’s not being used as an evacuation shelter, its 20,562-square-foot main hall can accommodate more than 600 guests and be reserved by the public for events.

“We are proud to provide our community and region with not only a shelter during disasters and recovery efforts but also another clean, up-to-date event space with ample room right in their own backyard,” Caldwell County Judge Hoppy Haden said. “An achievement like this requires a lot of people working together. We appreciate the effort of our staff and the support provided by Century

Construction Group, Langford Community Services, Method Architecture, Kleinfelder, the Texas General Land Office, Housing and Urban Development, IMEG, the City of Luling, Coleman & Associates and Someday Strategies LLC.”

Built with innovation and versatility in mind, the facility features advanced audio-visual systems, high-speed connectivity, and customizable space configurations to meet the needs of event organizers across industries.

Phyllis Hillhouse serves as the Caldwell County Community and Evacuation Center event and facility manager. Hillhouse previously worked for the City of Luling for 11 years in roles that included Event and Facilities Manager and Parks and Recreation Director before coming to work for the county.

Members of the construction, design and engineering teams as well as local and state officials praised the project, noting they believed it would serve the county and region well in both form and function:

“Kleinfelder is proud to have led the design team for this outstanding facility, working in close partnership with Method Architecture, IMEG, and Coleman & Associates. Together with Langford Community Management Services and Century Construction Group, the team successfully delivered a project that will serve and strengthen the community for years to come.

“This facility is the result of strong leadership and vision from the County Commissioners and Judge Haden, who recognized a critical community need and took decisive action. In 2020, they authorized Kleinfelder and Langford Community Management Services to develop conceptual plans, prepare cost estimates, and secure grant funding to bring this vision to life.

“Collaboration with the City of Luling was instrumental in selecting a strategic location for the facility—one that will effectively serve the residents of Caldwell County while also providing critical support to communities across Texas in times of declared disasters.

“Century Construction Group’s exceptional workmanship has resulted in a high-quality facility built to stand the test of time. This project reflects the power of partnership, thoughtful planning, and a shared commitment to community resilience.”

— Tracy Bratton, Land Development Practice Leader, Kleinfelder

“Century Construction is proud to present this building to Caldwell County with open doors. Over the last 18 months, our teams have worked hard to bring this project to life for the community. We are honored to have built such great relationships with everyone who played a role in making this facility a reality, and we want to extend a special thanks to Caldwell County for trusting us to construct it. We are excited to see the events and gatherings that will take place in this space and look forward to continuing to be a proud part of the Caldwell County community.”

— Bennett Douglas, Division Manager, Century Construction Group

“We were proud to collaborate with an incredible team on the Caldwell County Community and Evacuation Center, a project that reflects the power of thoughtful design in service of community. This facility is more than a building — it’s a long-term resource that will support residents in everyday life and

provide critical resilience when it matters most. Being part of a project with that kind of lasting impact is deeply rewarding for our team at Method."

— Renee Bean, Senior Project Manager, Method Architecture

The City of Luling is very excited about the new Caldwell County Community and Evacuation Center. This project is a true asset to Caldwell County and to the City of Luling.

This center is a true testament to the power of collaboration and the shared commitment of our local leaders to prioritize the needs of our community. Not only will it be used as an evacuation center but it will also be used as an event center for our citizens here in Luling and Caldwell County.

The City of Luling would like to thank Caldwell County, The Texas General Land Office and all those involved in making this project possible. This project represents the best of what can be achieved when passionate individuals come together for the good of the community. We are excited for what is in store for Luling and Caldwell County as we continue to collaborate with future projects.

— C.J. Watts, Mayor, City of Luling

"This is the kind of project that makes a community stronger. This new center gives Caldwell County neighbors a place to gather in good times and a safe place to turn in hard times. Whether it's sheltering families during wildfires and floods or hosting community events year-round, this center will serve the people well for generations. And best of all, it was paid for with state grant funding, not local taxpayers' hard-earned money. That's a win for Caldwell County all the way around."

— Stan Gerdes, State Representative, District 17

"The opening of Caldwell County's Community and Evacuation Center reflects an important investment in public safety and preparedness. This impressive facility will provide shelter for residents during emergencies while also serving as a valuable gathering space for conferences, meetings and special events. Congratulations to Caldwell County leaders and everyone who helped bring this project to fruition. I am confident it will serve local families and visitors well for years to come."

— Judith Zaffirini, State Senator, District 21