

**...Driver License Offices**  
(Continued from previous page)

The eligibility requirements for phone and online renewal are the same. The fee is the same for online, in-person and telephone renewals. Licenses must be renewed in person every 12 years, so a new photo can be taken and eyesight can be tested. For additional information about renewing your driver license or ID card, visit the DPS website.

Customers may obtain a replacement DL or ID card online, if they are able to provide the 20-character code on the front of their current license or card.

Additional information about online services can be found on the DPS website.

**Boaters urged to stay safe on Texas waters**

As part of National Safe Boating Week, which was held May 19-25, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department boater education and law enforcement are reminding Texans to be safe this summer by following the law and taking basic safety precautions while on the water.

In 2017, 45 boating fatalities occurred on Texas waters, an increase of more than 28 percent from 2016. On top of that, marine enforcement officers logged 172 boating accidents and 83 boating related injuries. While boating fatalities and accidents can be caused by a variety of circumstances, surviving an accident on the water boils down to one important precaution – wearing a life jacket or personal flotation device (PFD).

“Wearing a life jacket is the most important strategy boaters can take to stay safe on the water,” said Tim Spice, TPWD Boater Education Manager. “The overwhelming majority of boating fatalities are caused by drowning and most of those drowning victims are recovered without a life jacket.”

“It’s not enough to just have a life jacket on board –people need to wear it,” Spice added. “Accidents on the water can happen too fast to reach and put on a stowed life jacket.”

State law requires that a life jacket must be available for each occupant of the boat and children under 13 years of age are mandated to wear one while the boat or paddle craft is underway or drifting. Despite these laws, in Texas last year the number of citations issued for children not wearing a life jacket increased by nearly 12 percent.

“Texas Game Wardens regularly perform vessel safety checks to ensure boat operators and passengers are following the law,” said Cody Jones, TPWD Assistant Commander for Marine Enforcement. “Everyone who will be operating a boat, personal water craft or paddle craft this summer should make sure they are in compliance with all vessel safety requirements before hitting the water.”

Law enforcement will also be on alert for those violating

boating under the influence laws. Operating a boat with a blood alcohol concentration above 0.08 percent is an offense that can lead to fines, the loss of a driver’s license and an increased risk of accidents or fatalities on the water. In 2017, game wardens issued 152 citations across the state.

“Alcohol use is the leading contributing factor in recreational boater deaths,” Jones said. “Not only does it endanger the lives of boat operators and passengers, it endangers the lives of everyone who is outside enjoying Texas lakes and rivers.”

Other boating safety tips to keep in mind this summer include:

Take a boating safety course: Paddlers can find a free online safety course on the TPWD

website. For larger vessels, anyone born on or after Sept. 1, 1993, must complete a boater education course to operate a personal watercraft or a boat with a 15-horsepower rating or more. Boater education courses are regularly offered in many locations around the state, or boaters can find a selection of online boater courses that can be taken anytime online.

Learn to swim: The American Red Cross offers swimming lessons by certified instructors across the state.

Use an ignition safety switch: Most boat and personal water crafts come equipped by the manufacturer with an emergency engine cut-off switch. This safety device can shut off the engine if the operator falls off the personal water craft or out of the powerboat, or is otherwise thrown from the proper

operating position.

For more information about boating safety, laws and requirements, visit TPWD’s boating laws website at <https://tpwd.texas.gov/fishboat/boat/laws>.

**New TDI website sheds light on medical costs**

Need rotator cuff surgery and wondering what it’s going to cost you? Texas consumers now have a new tool to help them find out.

The Texas Department of Insurance has a new website - [TexasHealthcareCosts.org](https://TexasHealthcareCosts.org) - that provides cost information on more than 200 of the most common medical procedures, including many tests, surgeries, and office visits. The site provides both the average amount billed for the service and the average insurance

payment by ZIP code.

“It is incredibly difficult to get information on what a procedure will cost before you get the bill,” said Insurance Commissioner Kent Sullivan. “This website is going to help with that problem.”

Consumers can use the site to search for a procedure by ZIP code. For procedures that involve multiple bills, like a surgery, the search results will provide a total cost. The total can be broken down by the costs for the facility, surgeon, and anesthesia.

Consumers can use the information as a comparison tool when asking doctors and facilities about their charges for a procedure. The site includes in-network and out-of-network cost information.

“Consumers should be able to know the cost of a procedure up front, compare prices, and budget for medical care,” Sullivan said. “That’s the goal of this website.”

**Water Weekly**

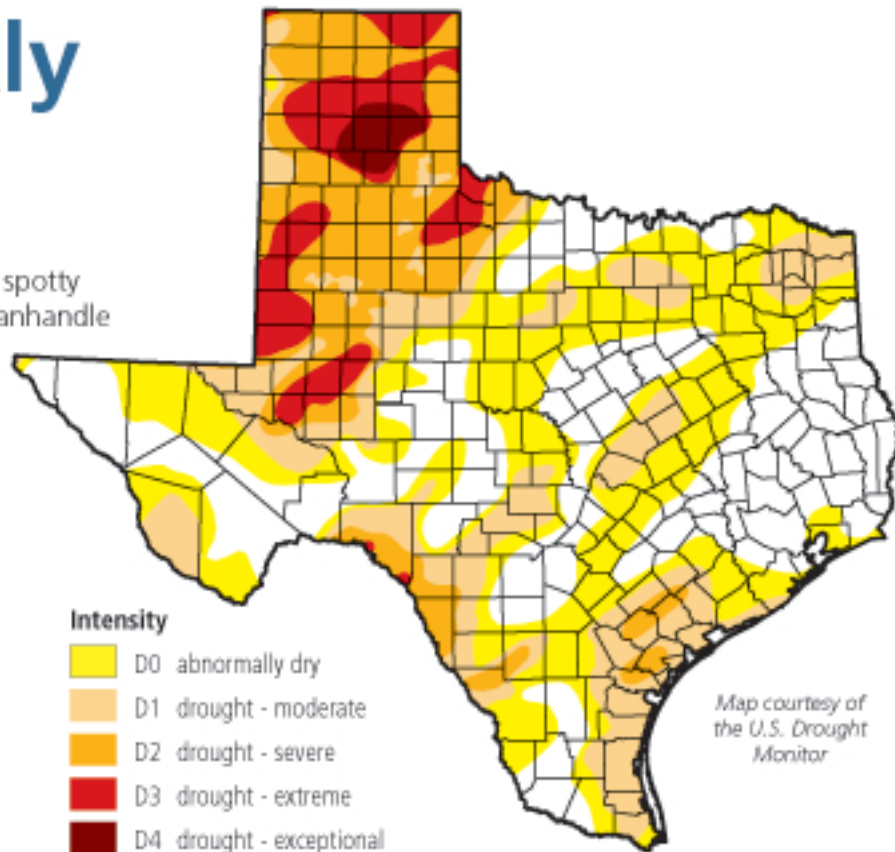
For the week of 06/04/18

**Water conditions**

The latest drought map shows the results of spotty precipitation across the state. Areas of the Panhandle and West Texas showed improvement while conditions degraded in other areas. For the first time in three months, drought reemerged in East Texas.

**Drought conditions**

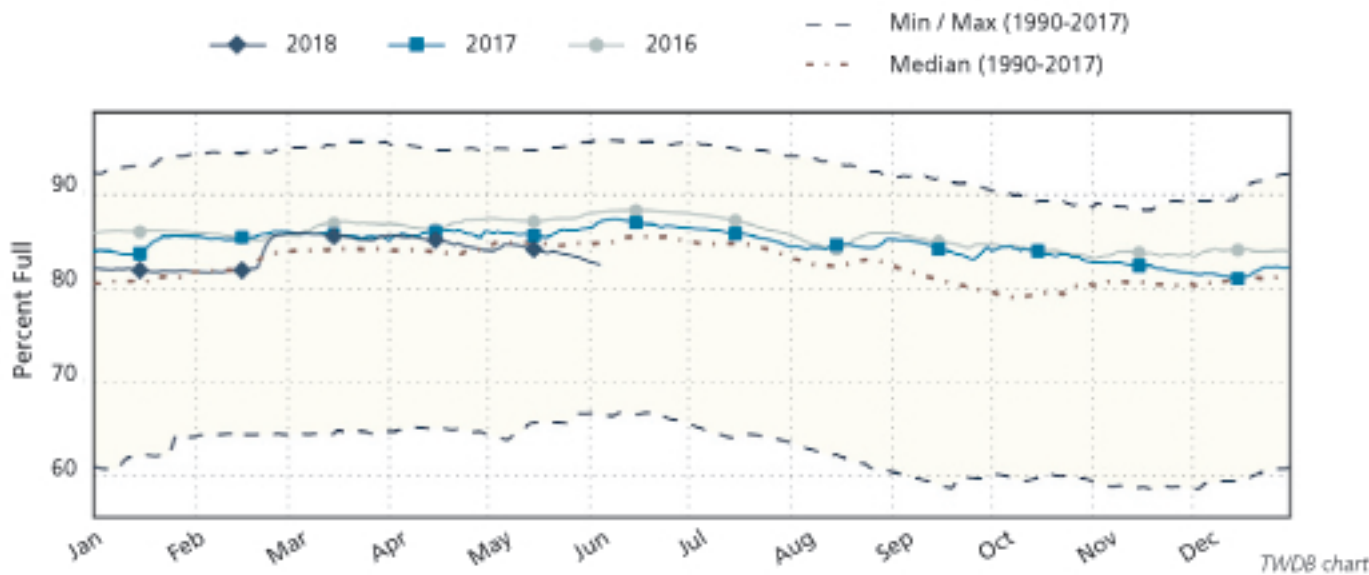
- ◆ 40% now
- ◆ 41% a week ago
- ◆ 55% three months ago
- ◆ 4% a year ago



Map courtesy of the U.S. Drought Monitor

**Statewide reservoir storage**

Drought conditions are beginning to impact our reservoirs. Statewide water supply storage, currently 83 percent of capacity, is nearly 2 percentage points below normal for this time of year. In February 2015, after years of drought, statewide storage was 18 percentage points lower than normal.



Written by Dr. Mark Wentzel — Dr. Mark Wentzel is a hydrologist in the TWDB’s Office of Water Science and Conservation.

Tulsi Oberbeck, Governmental Relations | [tulsi.oberbeck@twdb.texas.gov](mailto:tulsi.oberbeck@twdb.texas.gov) | 512-463-4864  
Kimberly Leggett, Media Relations | [kimberly.leggett@twdb.texas.gov](mailto:kimberly.leggett@twdb.texas.gov) | 512-463-5129