

The Bandera PROPHEET

Preparing for a date with cosmic destiny

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The Bandera Prophet

“We have been planning for more than a year. From the county’s perspective, we feel like we’re prepared,” Bandera County Emergency Management Coordinator Judy Lefevers said.

During an eclipse planning meeting, Lefevers and other community leaders went through a last-minute check list for Monday’s astronomical event.

“We don’t have any reason to feel like things will get out of hand. It will just will require patience,” Lefevers said, adding she did anticipate cell service to be “significantly bogged down” due to a large number of people on their phones, posting photos to social media and using Google Maps.

Lefevers said in emergencies, the county has 911 text service. She said Bandera Electric Cooperative has stated fiber and internet service should be uninterrupted.

“If you find yourself in a situation where you cannot get a call out, text 911 and a dispatcher will answer by text,” Lefevers said.

Bandera Marshal Nancy De Foster said an ambulance will be staged at Bandera Middle School; first aid stations will be set up at Lowes Grocery Store, the Bandera Marshal’s Office and at City Park; and law enforcement officers will be posted at every major intersection.

“If we can’t get to you, you should be able to get to an officer,” Lefevers said.

Sheriff Dan Butts said on Monday, approximately 32 officers will be on duty, tallying a total of about 400 hours of overtime. Four officers will rove centrally, and officers will help as needed in the city to help move traffic through. Beginning Thursday, an additional shift will be added, and more dispatchers will be working.

“It will be burden on the county, but it’s something we’ve got to do,” Butts said, adding he estimates between 3,000 to 8,000 people will be at Mansfield Park. “We’ve got a good plan. We’ve got everything lined up, and we’ve got everybody working. I think we’re as prepared as we can be. It doesn’t matter if we’re prepared or not, we will have to deal with it as it happens. And we will deal with it.”

Butts said to expect traffic and delays from all directions.

“If traffic is as bad as they say it’s going to be, the only way in or out is by helicopter,” Butts said, adding extra locations for air evacuations have been identified.

In non-emergent situations, Butts said to call the Sheriff’s Office at 830-796-3771.

City Administrator Stan Farmer said parking and walk-ins will be permitted in the City Park, which will open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Fees are \$50 per car, and \$10 per person to walk in. There will be no entry charges after the eclipse event.

“One thing I can’t emphasize enough is the traffic,” Pct 3 Commissioner Jack Moseley said. “A very large part of these people coming in to Bandera are trying to get west... We may not get a gas delivery until Wednesday (April 10), because all these towns have the same problem we’ve got. It can be and will be an issue, I promise you, if the people show up.”

Moseley said estimations of people in the county could swell to four times the population, many of whom may park on the sides of the roads. To check areas of high traffic, Butts recommended using Google Maps or Waze.

The eclipse transition will begin at about 12:14 p.m. Totality begins at about 1:31 p.m., and will last just over four minutes. The transition will end at 2:55 p.m.

In addition to what’s happening overhead, other phenomena include the temperature - which will drop between 10 and 20 degrees in minutes, as well as the behaviors of insects and animals.

“You will hear crickets. Your chickens will react. Horses may want to turn around and go back to the stables,” Convention and Visitors Bureau

Executive Director Patricia Moore said. “Be aware, there will be an impact on your animals.”

If traveling, helpful tips include bringing water, medications, food, chairs, blankets, sunscreen, and eclipse viewing glasses.

“The main thing I want people to be aware of is pack your patience. Pack your politeness. Pack your respect. We have welcomed international people forever to our community. Treat them with our typical friendliness,” Moore said. “This too, shall pass.”