Twitter Thread by Austin Energy

Austin Energy
@austinenergy

WATCH LIVE: The City of Austin to address the ongoing severe weather and its impact on Austin and Travis County residents, utilities, and service. Follow this thread for live

City Manager Spencer Cronk: This storm is stressing our entire community in ways we can never imagine. We are so sorry for the continued hardships so many in our community have had to endure the past several days. We are getting resources that can help you.

Palmer Events Center is full.
However, there is still limited room available at:
•Del Valle High School, 5201 Ross Road, Del Valle, TX 78617
•Mendez Middle School, 5106 Village Square, 78744
•Reilly Elementary School, 405 Denson

Cronk: @AustinISD has warming centers. Place for people to warm up and charge essential medical Open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
•Lee ES - CENTRAL 3308 Hampton Road
•Murchison MS - 3700 N. Hills Drive
•Joslin ES – 4500 Menchaca Road
•Barrington ES – 400 Cooper Dr,

Austin Water Director Greg Meszaros: We're sorry for the hardships people are experiencing. we never imagined a day hospitals wouldn't have water, large customer base wouldn't have water. We're committed to restoring our system as safely and rapidly as we can.

Meszaros: Plant from yesterday is back in service - we corrected that problem and plant is ramping back up. We have to restore pressure to our system, because all the water main breaks, residential pipes bursting, our reservoir drained out in the past day.

We have to bring those reservoirs back up to service. At the low point, they were all nearly empty. We have to check infrastructure, we have to find some of these leaks, if we simply tried to turn the system back on, we'll simple repeat what we happened the other night.

Once we stabilize the system and it has adequate pressure, we can sample the water. Customers should continue to conserve water. Please use it wisely and in a moderate way.

Meszaros: We are seeing in lower demand relatively to the amount of water we can produce. We want to make more water than we are using. Our priority is reestablishing service to hospitals.

Austin Energy GM Jackie Sargent: Like many of you we can't wait for the snow and ice to melt and the power to be restored. There is some promising news. Our focus is on restoring customers who haven't had power. While we had 220K without power at the height on Tuesday morning,

situation is improving. We've been able to restore power to tens of thousands of customers. We won't stop until everyone is restored. Currently, ERCOT hasn't mandated outages. As weather conditions change, ERCOT might have to mandate more outages...

but we will make every effort to make these outages short durations. Crews are working to restore households as quickly as possible. Prioritizing customers who have been out the longest.

Because there is so much work to be done, I can't give you a firm answer on when your power will be back on. We can't power everyone back up at the same time, we would overload the system. We have to restore in sections, and this will take time.

As we work, it can reveal other issues. Wednesday's ice storm brought more issues. Some aren't recognized until we restore a system and the issue presents itself. It's not just flipping a switch.

Sargent: Half of an inch of ice can add 500 lbs to a power line causing it to break. During a typical outage, it may be possible to isolate a line quickly, but during an ice storm, crews need to remove the ice from the equipment, and that adds time to restoration.

Sargent: I wish bringing everyone back online was easy as flipping a switch or pushing a button. But it's not. I want to thank our crews and people behind the scenes. Ask the public to let them do their job safely.

AFD: Carbon monoxide danger. We have responded to numerous calls of people trying to warm their homes and burning items. We are urging the public to use approved fireplaces and burn approved firewood/logs. There is a fire hazard and CO poisoning.

AFD: If there is a fire, please call 911 immediately. Response times can be slowed down due to the road conditions. Do not wait or assume someone else has called. Do not use elevators. Many do not have power, and power might go out with the emergency situation. Use stairs.

AFD: We've responded to thousands of water main breaks, pipes bursting. It's important for you to know where your water shutoff is. If you're in an apartment/building, contact your management so they can quickly get there to shut the water off.

Public Works Dir. Richard Mendoza: We've been working to clear roads and treating overpasses. We also have contractors to help. We are confident we can complete the high priority routes overnight.

Dir. of HSEM Austin Juan Ortiz: We are supporting multiple shelters across the community. Water has been purchased and is on the way - as soon as we're able, we will distribute. Other cities have similar needs.

@CapMetroATX: As of today we have resumed critical service from 10 a.m.-8 p.m. CapMetro GO Line 512-474-1200 can provide info. All fares are waived. All COVID19 precautions are still in place.

CapMetroATX: Yesterday, we provided 37 dialysis trips. Today, we have 60 trips for dialysis. We're helping transport to warming centers and moving people from Palmer Events Center to Del Valle HS.

Media questions.
What do you recommend for people who don't have water+electricity?
Meszaros: Reach out to friends and neighbors, we're working to standup water distribution centers with our partners

Q: Will the city and Austin Water make concentrated efforts to alert the public when water returns so residents can prepare:
Ortiz: Yes, we will be using tools to prepare people for that.
Meszaros: Water service may be restored suddenly. Customers can prepare:

check all their faucets and make sure they're turned off. Customers need to know where their water turn off is. If you have a home, there's a water turn off valve at the meter. If you're a renter, have landlord contact/apartment management.

Q: Update on # of residents on power restoration?
Sargent: We've restored up to 92% of our customers, ~42K customers who are waiting to be restored. We're working through that process, we have crews on the ground and in ops.

Q: Has Austin Energy received any indication from ERCOT that the utility may need to shut down circuits again? If that doesn't happen, can you give an estimate on how long it will take for 100% of customers to have power back on?

Sargent: We do not have an indication that ERCOT will ask us to reduce our load on the system. We continue to monitor and we're working to bring customers back online. We're doing this in a controlled and methodical manner. This is a matter of a safety.

As we're doing that, we're identifying additional hazards/situations that weren't known when the system wasn't energized. If that's the case, we have to sectionalize and make repairs. I wish we can give an estimate. If you have power, continue to limit your use.

If you've been without power, problem we see is cold load pickup. When power goes out, people leave on thermostat at higher level, lights on, etc. when the circuit is restored and power is returned to your home, there is a requirement for a lot of energy to flow, it can cause

a circuit to trip again. Leave one light on so you know when the power has been restored. Our crews will continue to work 24/7 and hopefully within the next several days we would have power restored to all of our customers. There will be some outliers.

Q: How likely is it that the water is contaminated and what needs to happen for the order to be lifted?
Meszaros: While risk is low, we still want customers to boil their water. Once we demonstrate sustained pressure has returned, we'll take samples.

Q: Were “rolling blackouts” ever really implemented? Does the city have a plan for better communications with the residents?
Sargent: As the situation progressed on Sunday evening into Monday morning, what ERCOT saw a significant decline in the power supply on the statewide grid

They could not let the supply of electricity come below the demand on the system. They immediately started all of us, to start reducing our load based on our load requirement share. When they did that, it was very quick. We have circuits that have been identified

If they didn't take that action, the grid would have gone black. Everybody would be without power. The measures that would have been required to start the systems back up would've been complex.

When that happened, we maxed out on our circuits to rotate. We had nothing left. We would've had to tap into critical loads - hospitals, etc. Once we got to that point, we had no room to take a circuit out and bring another back on.

As we continued to get directives to reduce more load, we worked with our partners to do so. We had to stay there until the system stabilized until ERCOT allowed us to restore power.

Austin Water: It will be a multi-day process to restore water to our entire system. We don't know how bad those leaks are. Customers who don't have water, it's better to plan for worst conditions (days instead of hours).