



AUSTINCODE
DEPARTMENT

AUSTIN CODE DEPARTMENT
2021 Inclement Weather Response
PRESENTED BY Elaine Garrett
April 2021

Response to Winter Storm Uri

On February 15, 2021, the City Manager announced that the City of Austin would suspend normal operations due to the **hazardous weather conditions**.

The Austin Code Department (ACD) temporarily halted its business operations, including routine code inspections, from February 16 through February 19, 2021.

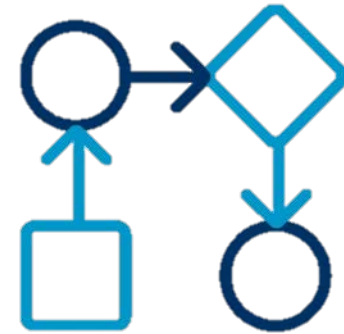
ACD mobilized an initial emergency response team of field personnel to remain on standby, ready to address any urgent complaints reported to Austin 3-1-1 during this timeframe that would require immediate attention.





ACD communicated with Development Services Department (DSD) Building Official to determine emergency repair and permitting protocols moving forward, consider any fees that may be required, and coordinate timelines for obtaining emergency permits.

ACD joined with Austin 3-1-1 intake staff to create a standardized response to code complaints received for Winter Storm Uri damages.





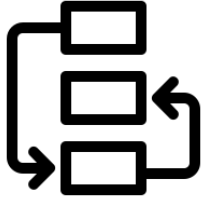
Initial Communications



- **ACD's Community Engagement and Outreach (CEO) team developed standardized messaging** that was uploaded to the ACD website and provided to ACD Code Connect Line and code inspectors to communicate news and resources about the storm to the public.
- Developed **bilingual Cold Weather Informational Flyer**.
- **Collaborated with cross-departmental PIO teams** to create [ATXrepairs](#). This site has information about contractors, repairs, permit assistance, code updates and more.
- Provided messaging to the **City's Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM)**.
- Issued a communication with specific instructions to field operations staff focused on
 - 1) addressing the backlog of 3-1-1 complaints received related to Winter Storm Uri
 - 2) supporting the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) request for inspections to determine locations in the city that were without water service and to support the water distribution effort.



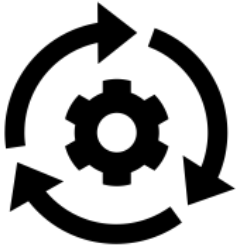
Procedural Outlines



- **Responded to Priority 2** (non-imminent/dangerous conditions) and COVID-19 cases as **the top priorities**.
- **Responded and inspected properties** in accordance with the department's ACD-103 Case Management Standards policy.
- **Temporarily delayed the issuance of an NOV**, if an acceptable Action Plan was received from the landlord within 48 hours.
- **Advised owners to contact DSD** with any questions pertaining to permitting requirements for repairs, and provide the following link: <http://austintexas.gov/page/emergency-repairs>
- For **tenant-occupied** properties, tenants were advised to reach out to their landlord to request a service repair order. Cases were not to be closed until it was determined that the landlord had followed up with DSD regarding any necessary permits and the inspector had been notified.
- For complaints about accumulations of brush, trees, flooded materials placed at the curb line or other similar complaints, compliance timelines were dependent upon **Austin Resource Recovery's ability to conduct additional brush and bulk pick-ups**.



Implementations



- Assembled a directed response team to **respond over the weekend of Feb. 20-21, 2021.** In addition to the standard Extended Hours and Short-Term Rental weekend response teams.
- **Inspections were prioritized for properties in the City's Repeat Offender Program (ROP)** to quickly assess living conditions and protect Austin's vulnerable tenant populations.
- **Re-assigned 10 inspectors**, in addition to support staff, to temporarily assist with the area emergency water distribution effort.
- **ACD IT established a unique identifier (IWC2021)** for the inclement weather conditions to be utilized in the department's case management database to track and report cases associated with Winter Storm Uri.
- February 22, 2021, working through the EOC, **ACD partnered with the Austin Water Utility to respond to calls for inspections at locations citywide** that had reported no water service. Once water service across the city was restored, ACD focused on responding to complaints concerning water quality issues, as well as no availability to hot water and/or no gas service.



ACD entered Phase 2 of its emergency response effort:

- **Conducted initial inspections of interior units** reported through the Austin 3-1-1 system and resumed normal operating hours.
- **Resumed inspections on a priority basis** to maintain a consistent response and in consideration of the challenges faced by homeowners and property managers in correcting the problems.
- **Verified resource needs** (water) and assess the level of conditions requiring attention.
- **Requested affected landlords submit an Action Plan** for repairs within 48 hours. Action Plans were to include repair plans, alternative accommodations for the tenants, and any resources that would be provided to tenants such as food, vouchers, or water.
- **Notices of Violation (NOVs) were delayed** pending a decrease in the challenges faced by property owners regarding the availability of contractors and supplies needed to perform repairs.



Cases

773

Deficiencies

312

NOVs

272

Citations

1

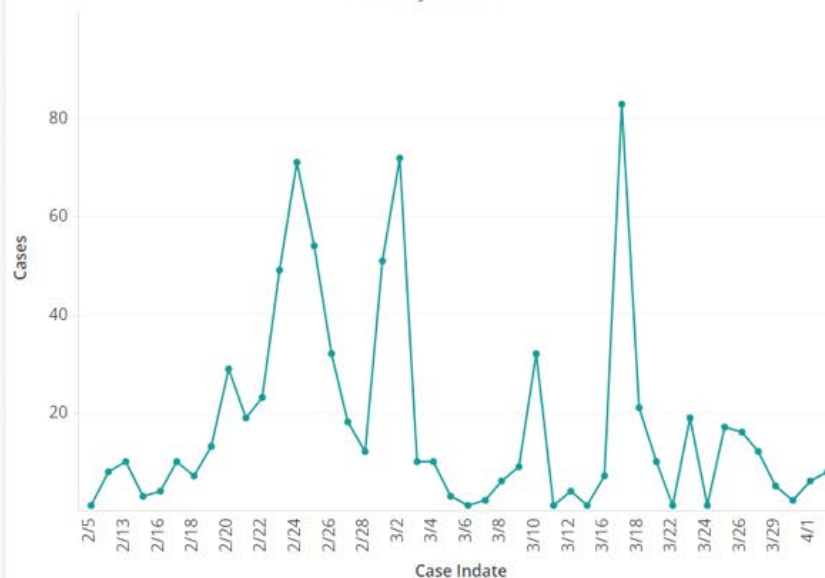
Case by Status

Case Status	Cases	% of Total
Active	157	20%
Closed	616	80%
Total	773	100%

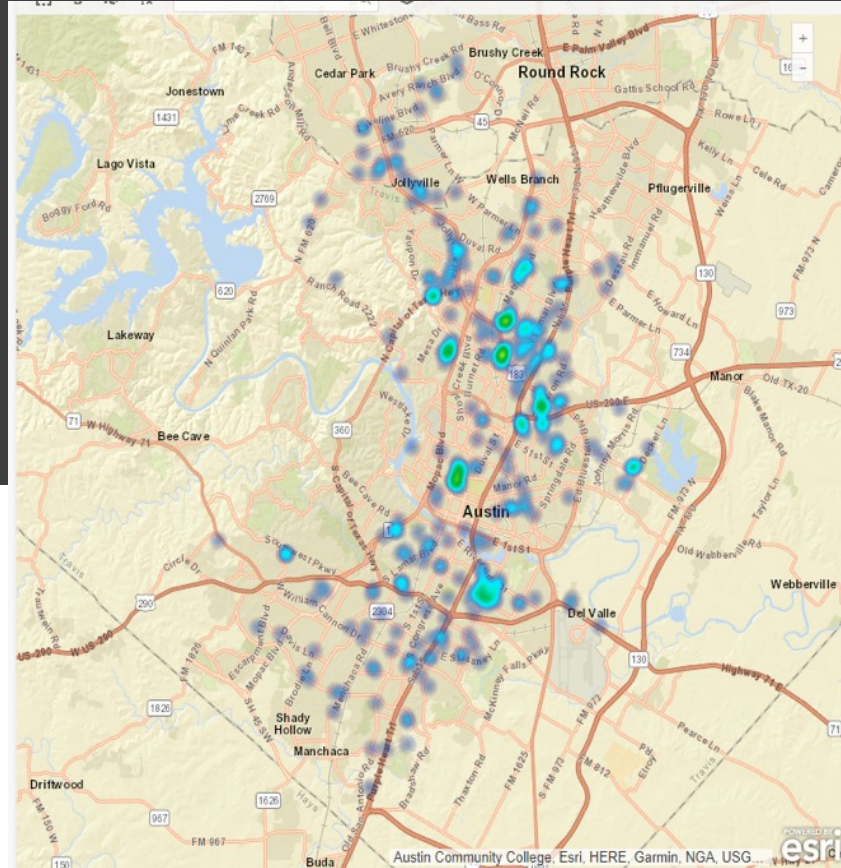
Case by Creator

Created by	Cases	% of Total
ACD Users	267	35%
311	506	65%
Total	773	100%

Cases by Indate



Maps



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ACD Emergency Response Phase 3: Legal Escalation-

Once an NOV compliance timeframe has expired and a property owner has failed to make progress toward compliance, ACD may escalate non-compliant cases through the following quasi-judicial avenues of legal enforcement:

1. Administrative hearing process under City Code Chapter 2-13 (Administrative Adjudication of Violations)
2. Building and Standards Commission (BSC)
3. Municipal Court

Austin 3-1-1 Online Dashboard and Call Hotline Improvements –

ACD is in communication with Austin Energy and is set to meet with staff in April 2021 to discuss the necessary changes to be implemented to expand the Austin 3-1-1 online dashboard and call hotline capabilities. Recommendations and progress for this task will be revisited in our final report to Council due in June 2021.



The following resource link was provided to property owners:

[Texas Occupations Code - Title 8. Regulation of Environmental and Industrial Trades - 1301. Plumbers](#)

A Cold Weather Informational Flyer (available in both English and Spanish) was created as a resource for staff to distribute. The team collaborated with PIO teams from multiple City departments to funnel news and resources to a single, public facing website ([ATXrepairs](#)).



THANK YOU

Any questions?

