# Winter Storm Uri After Action Report: Findings Report

#### City of Austin, Texas

Homeland Security and Emergency Management With Support from Hagerty Consulting, Inc. November 4, 2021



### Introduction



#### WINTER STORM URI

Precursor for Future Disasters

### AFTER ACTION REVIEW Opportunity to Better Prepare

and Respond

SPAR SPAR NATU

#### WHOLE COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Build and Better Utilize Capabilities

Photo credit: © Austin Fire Department

Photo credit: @ Austin Fire Department



### is an After-Action Review?

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A usually and customary structured review of an incident or event

Includes recommendations for the purpose of continuous improvement Identifies what went well, best practices, and areas for improvement

### **After-Action Reporting Process: Document Review**

Over 75 documents were reviewed including:



Stakeholder AARs and Reports

ACTION PLAN

**Incident Action Plans** 



Situation Reports



Shift Change Reports



**Resource Trackers** 

MEETING MINUTES		
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Winter Storm Meeting Minutes

# Action Reporting Process: Stakeholder Engagement and Interviews

### 422

Lines of data compiled into the Findings Matrix. (Observations, strengths, areas of improvement, and recommendations)

### 242

Stakeholders were identified and invited to participate in the After-Action reporting process

### 70+

Meetings were conducted both in person and virtually

190+

Individuals completed interviews from...

### 70

...organizations, agencies, departments, or offices

# Figure - Action Reporting Process: Survey

- 191 respondents participated in the 56-question survey.
- Participants from a diverse background were provided the opportunity to complete the survey
- Answers were anonymous
- Data was analyzed for trends
- Questions ranged from job function to person experience during the storm



Total Survey Participants:

### **Winter Storm Uri AAR - Structure**



### 2021 WINTER STORM URI AFTER-ACTION REVIEW

CITY OF AUSTIN & TRAVIS COUNTY





Prepared on behalf of the City of Austin in cooperation with Travis County



deadines for implementation and designates an accountable department or party for each action. The recommendations are derived from the incident Analysis in the Winter Storm Un AAR. The AAR provides the events summary, timeline, and necessary context for the IP and its recommendations. Both the AAR and IP should be read and considered as part of the same document.

#### **IMPROVEMENT PLAN FRAMEWORK**

Recommendations in this IP are presented in two parts. The first part, presented immodiately bolow, categorizes recommendations according to the City of Austin Strategic Direction 2023 and Travis County Vision and Goals (6). The second part, found in Anrex D, includes a spreadshreet comprehensive of all recommendations. These recommendations are categorized by the strategic direction, vision, and goals as well as response arreas and core capabilities.

TOWARDS A MORE RESILIENT COMMUNITY The following section introduces the Winter Storm Uri Improvement Plan (IP). The IP identifies actions for improvement in the context of existing priorities for the City and County. Further, the IP establishes

Figure 5: City and County Context for the IP

#### AUSTIN STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2023 TRAVIS COUNTY VISION AND GOALS Strategic Vision: County Vision: Austin is a beacon of sustainability, social equity Travis County is an innovative, vibrant com and economic opportunity; where diversity and creativity are celebrated; where community needs that preserves diverse cultural heritage and natura esources and values are recognized; where leadership **County Goals:** comes from its clizens and where the necessities of life are affordable and accessible to all. Promote community resilience in daily living and in times of emergency Promote the well-being of our residents through Strategic Outcomes · Economic Opportunity & Alfordability social, economic, and health and safety Mobility initiatives Ensure the public salety and peaceful resolution · Salety of conflicts through the justice system and other Health & Environment Culture & Lifelong Learning public processes Preserve and protect our environment and Government That Works For All natural resources through responsible land Measuring Progress: stewardship Empower the public through civic engagement Austin uses a series of indicators and metrics to measure progress towards strategic outcomes and vision. This progress is publicly available online via Foster transportation mobility and accessibility an online dashboard Austin Winter Weather AAR Project Overview | 7



### Findings: A More Uncertain Future

### Winter Storm Uri

Precursor for Future Disasters.





## Findings: Preparing for Uncertainty

Winter Storm Uri was a precursor of future events. The City and County will likely be required to respond to storms of greater intensity combined with equally challenging emergencies.





Cascading Impacts to Critical Assets

Climate Crisis Growing Impacts



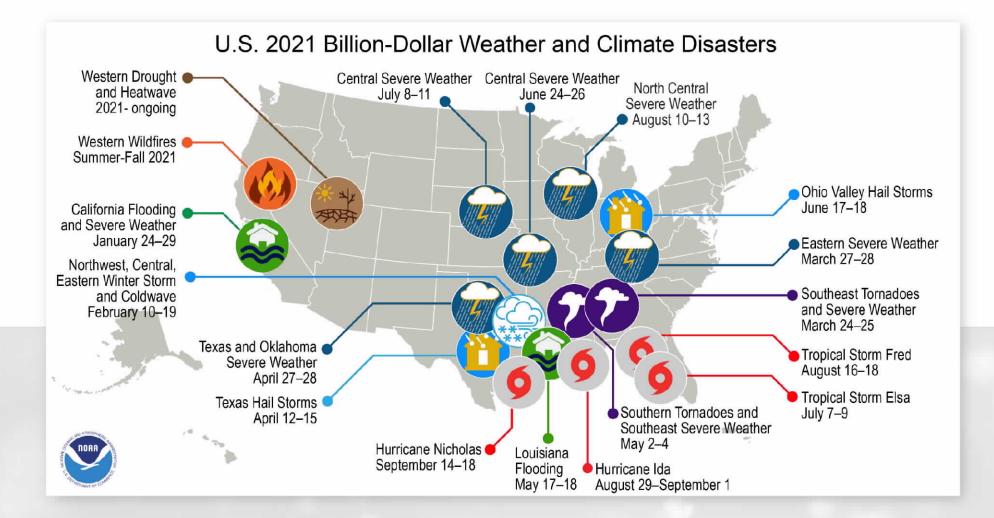


Concurrent Emergencies

Compounding Community Impacts

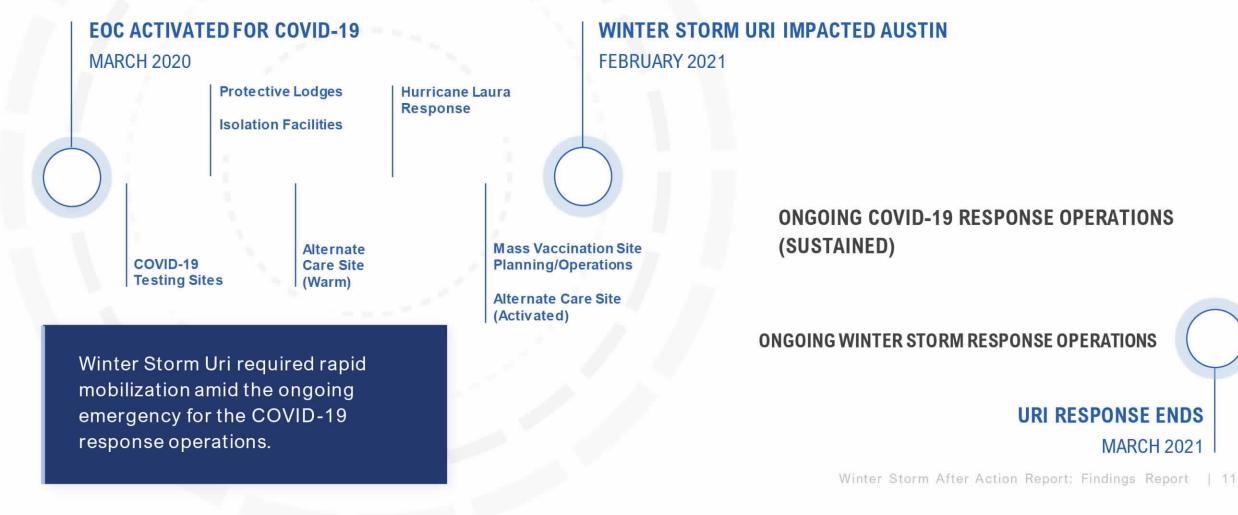
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### **Findings: Increasing Cost of Disaster Events**



## **Andings: Overlapping Emergencies**

As the storm approached on February 10, 2021, the EOC and City and County departments had operated for **11 months on the COVID-19 response**.





# Findings: Building from Strength

### **After Action Review**

Opportunity to Better Prepare and Respond.

### **Findings: A Resilient Community**

### 1000+

Residents provided shelter

### 1 million+

Gallons of drinking water distributed

170,000

Shelf stable and prepared meals distributed

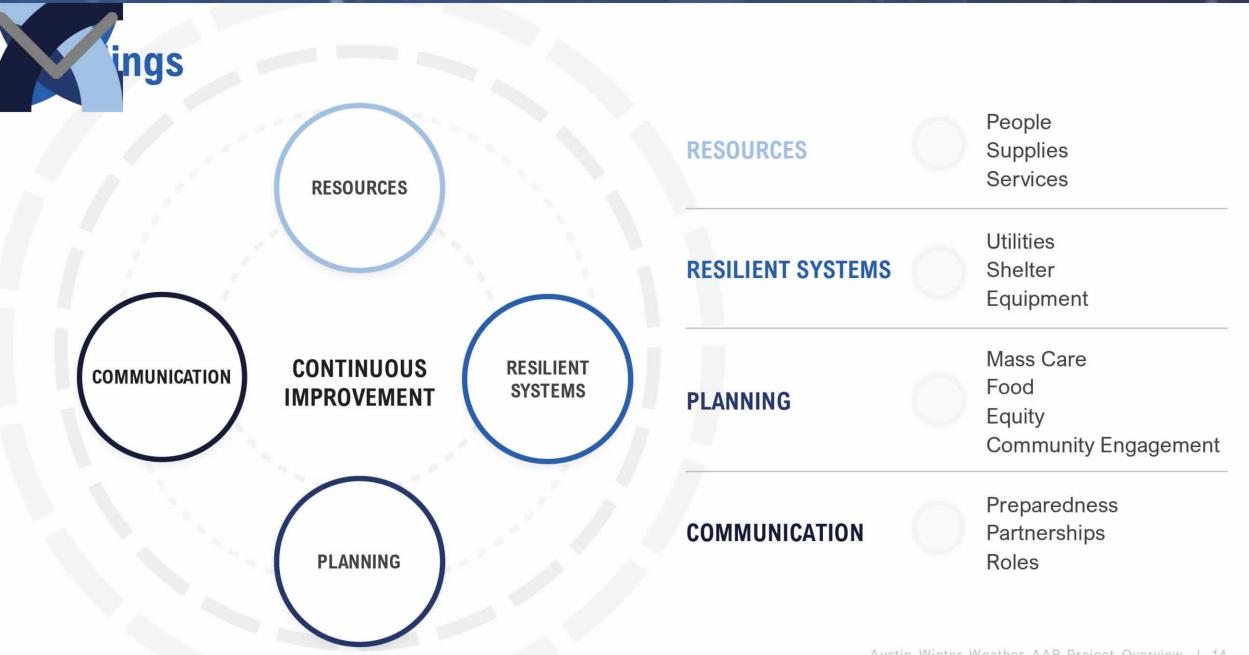








Photo credits from Left to Right ©: (top) Austin HSEM, (bottom) Austin Fire Department, ADRN, Austin Energy



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#### FINDINGS OVERVIEW:

### **Community Engagement**

The actions of community groups proved essential during the winter storm. At the same time, there were significant gaps in implementation and coordination between government, elected officials, and community response operations.



- Implement best practices for utilizing community-based organizations
- Revise disaster plans with considerations for additional nonprofits, private sector, and communitybased service delivery organizations
- Codify roles and responsibilities between stakeholders, and contingencies when organizations are not available.

### Equity

The storm disproportionately impacted vulnerable populations. Departments worked to address needs. At the same time, there were gaps in planning and operations for unhoused, elderly, lower-income residents, and other vulnerable populations.



- Implement policy on equitable availability and distribution of goods and services.
- Include provisions in planning that address the needs of the vulnerable.
- Codify role of Equity Office in planning and EOC operations

### **Emergency Staffing**

Staff and volunteer shortages hindered operations. City and County departments do not have adequate staffing models for multipleresponse operations. Support agencies could not provide volunteers due to COVID-19.



#### 0-0-0-0-0

- Commission an analysis to evaluate appropriate staffing levels
- Continue to resource alternative staffing schemes, such as the reserve workforce and engagement with the private sector
- Require mandatory training of identified City and County staff in disaster response operations

### Infrastructure

The storm caused outages in water, power, communication, and transportation infrastructure. These outages had additional, or cascading, impacts, on community, emergency, and medical services. These were not envisioned or accounted for in planning.



#### noto credit: C Austin Fire Department

- Revise planning assumptions for multiplehazard events
- Investigate adding resilient infrastructure for essential facilities
- Identify shelters with durable infrastructure

### **Mass Care**

The lack of comprehensive planning hindered coordination, service delivery, and implementation of sheltering, feeding, water distribution, and other components of mass care, as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). There were gaps in staffing, services, and other aspects of the response operations.



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- Establish a comprehensive and scalable mass care plan that builds on current planning.
- Develop a comprehensive operational disaster feeding plan, that also builds on current planning.
- Include provisions on sheltering operations within revised mass care planning.

### **Preparedness**

Many in the community were unprepared for the storm, an understandable outcome given the event's unprecedented impacts. Personal preparedness is important to better plan for and respond to an event with system-wide impacts.



Photo credit: © Austin Public Works

- Emphasize strategies for personal preparedness, resilience, and fostering social connections
- Implement best practice programs for personal preparedness in supporting staff
- Identify programs, resources and approaches to improve or encourage whole community resilience and risk reduction, including businesses, non-profits, community groups.



### **Next Steps**

### Whole Community Response

Build and Better Utilize Resource & Capabilities.

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### **Actions Taken**

RESOURCES	<ul> <li>Shared EM position with Austin Water</li> <li>Implemented disaster reservist-contactors</li> </ul>	
<b>RESILIENT SYSTEMS</b>	<ul> <li>Initiated Resiliency Hubs program</li> <li>Invested in transportation and utility equipment</li> </ul>	
PLANNING	<ul> <li>Updated emergency plans &amp; procedures</li> <li>Implemented enhanced EOC and shelter trainings</li> </ul>	
COMMUNICATION	<ul> <li>Revised and improved community outreach plan</li> <li>Established accessible alert system</li> </ul>	

### Implement 132 recommendations in Improvement Plan

### **Coordinate preparation for Winter Weather**

- Austin-Travis County Winter Weather Seminar | November 17, 2021
- Austin-Travis County Winter Weather Table-Top Exercise | Mid-December, 2021

### Coordinate as a community to enhance resilience at all levels

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