

# Winter Storm Uri After Action Report: Findings Report

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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

Photo credit: © Austin Fire Department



## AFTER ACTION REVIEW

Opportunity to Better Prepare  
and Respond

Photo credit: © Austin Fire Department



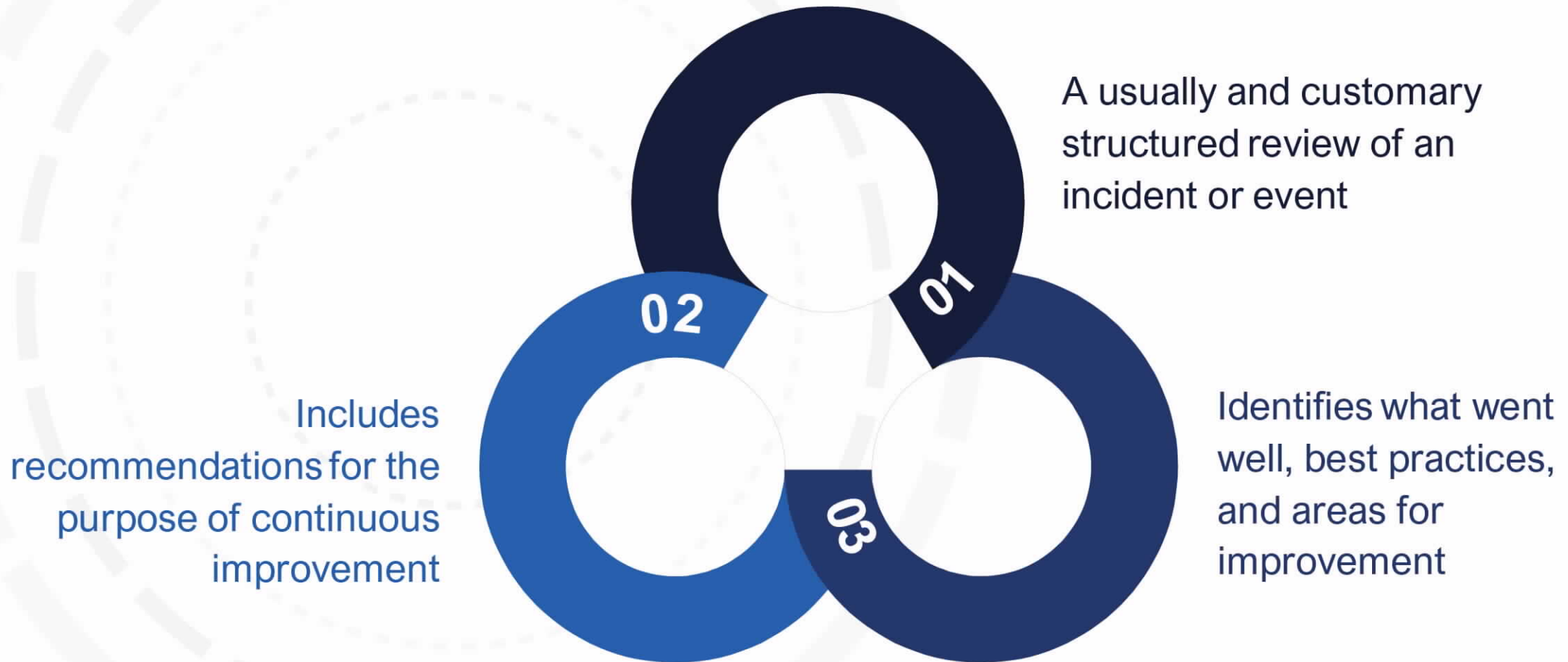
## WHOLE COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Build and Better Utilize  
Capabilities

Photo: Austin Monthly



## What is an After-Action Review?

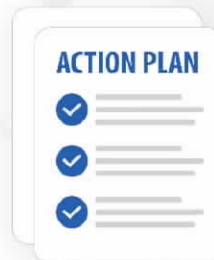


# After-Action Reporting Process: Document Review

Over 75 documents were reviewed including:



Stakeholder AARs and Reports



Incident Action Plans



Situation Reports



Shift Change Reports



Resource Trackers



Winter Storm Meeting Minutes





# After-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

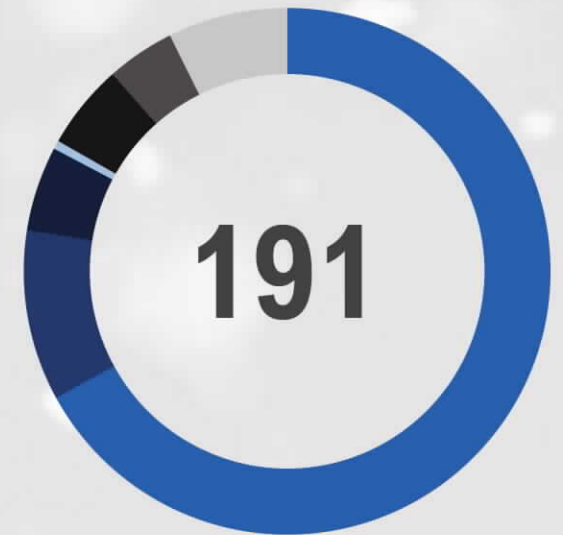


## After-Action Reporting Process: Survey

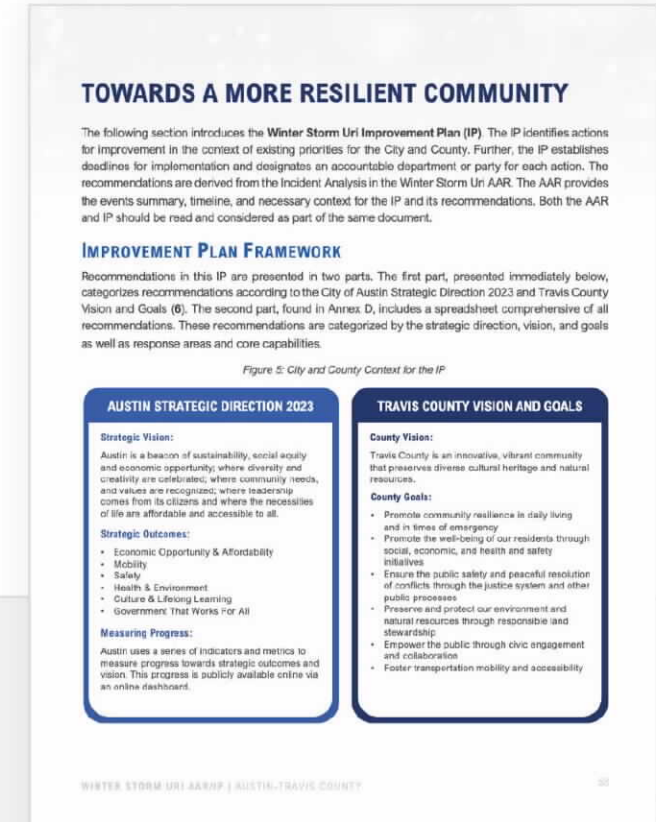
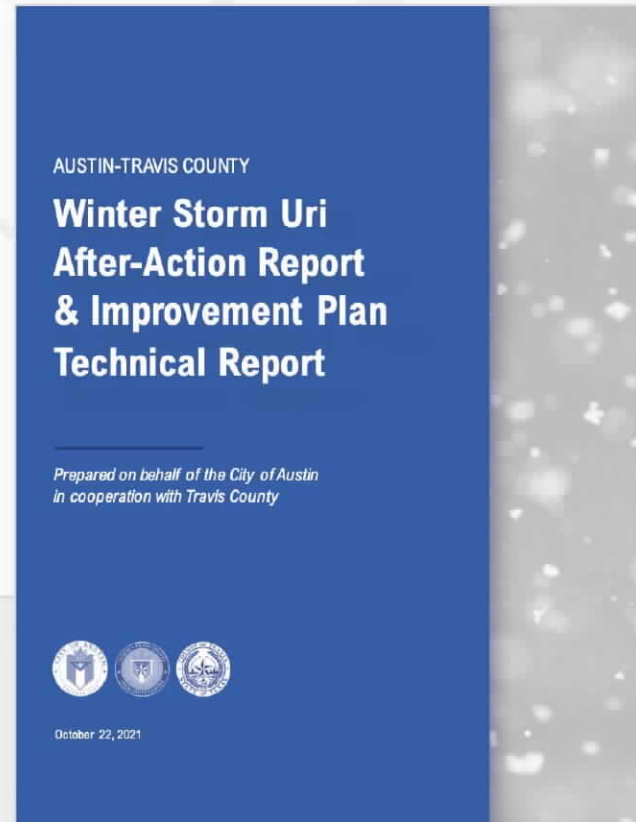
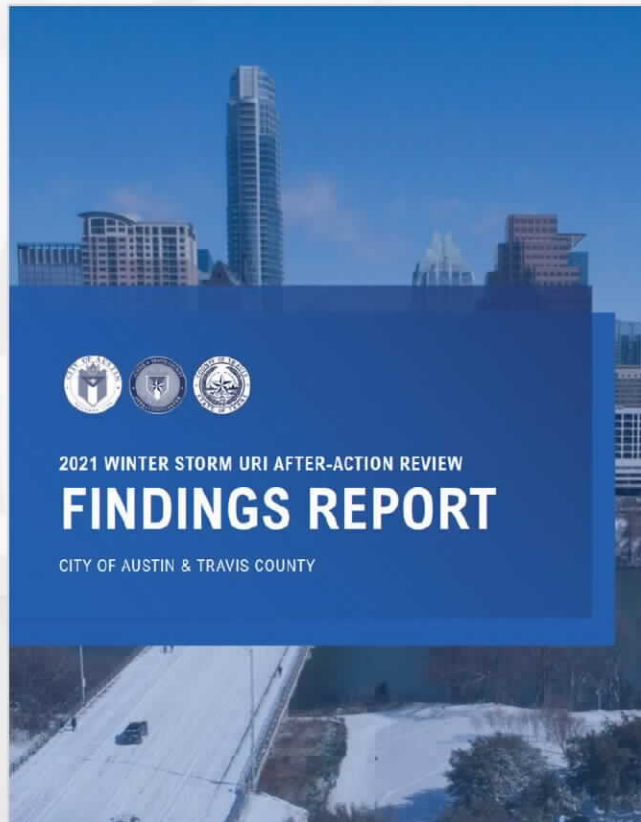
- 191 respondents participated in the 56-question survey.
- Participants from a diverse background were provided the opportunity to complete the survey
- Answers were anonymous
- Data was analyzed for trends
- Questions ranged from job function to person experience during the storm



**Total Survey  
Participants:**



# Winter Storm Uri AAR - Structure







# 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.



Compounding  
Community  
Impacts



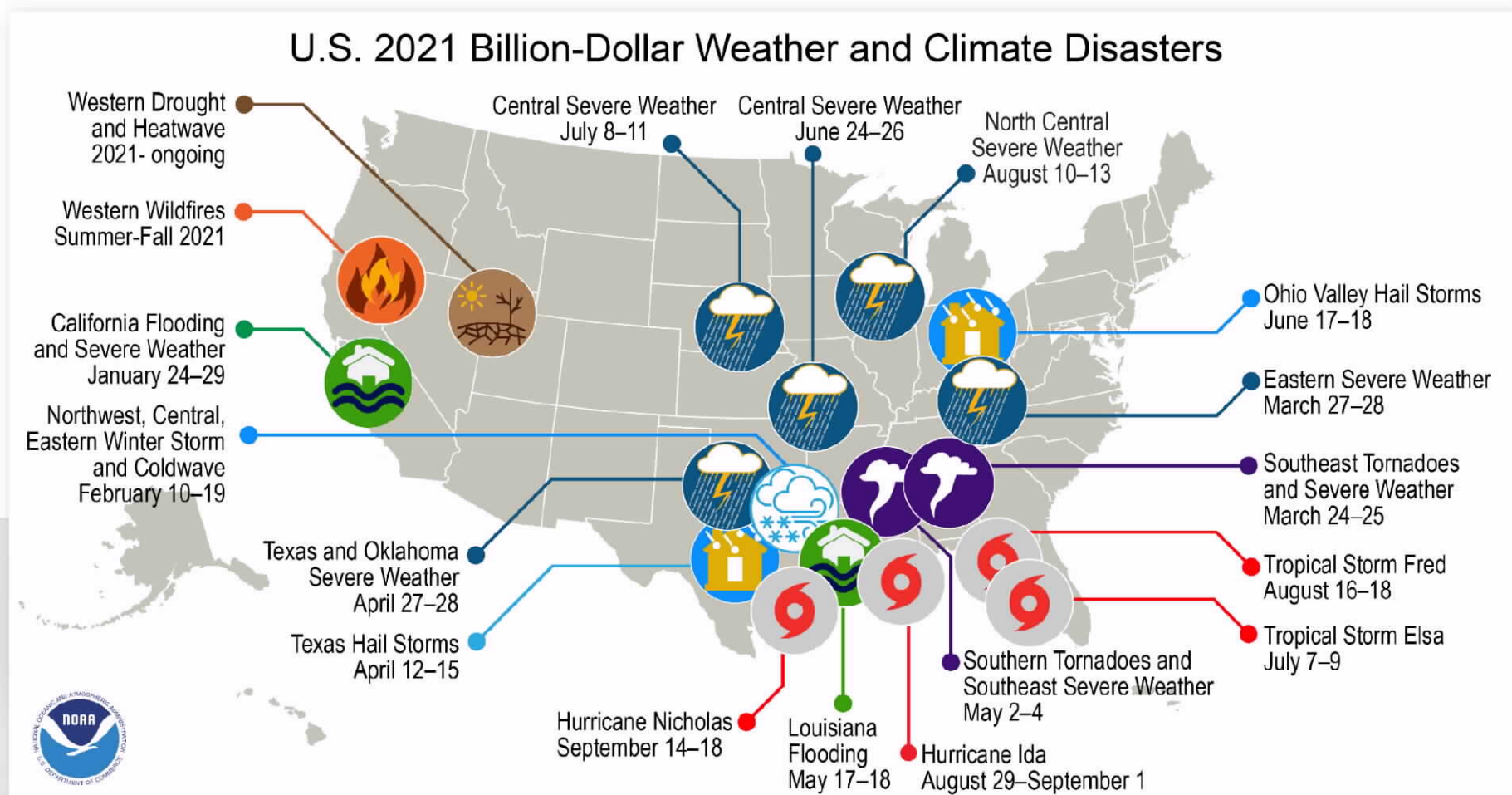
Cascading Impacts  
to Critical Assets



Concurrent  
Emergencies

Climate Crisis  
Growing Impacts

# Findings: Increasing Cost of Disaster Events





# Findings: 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.**

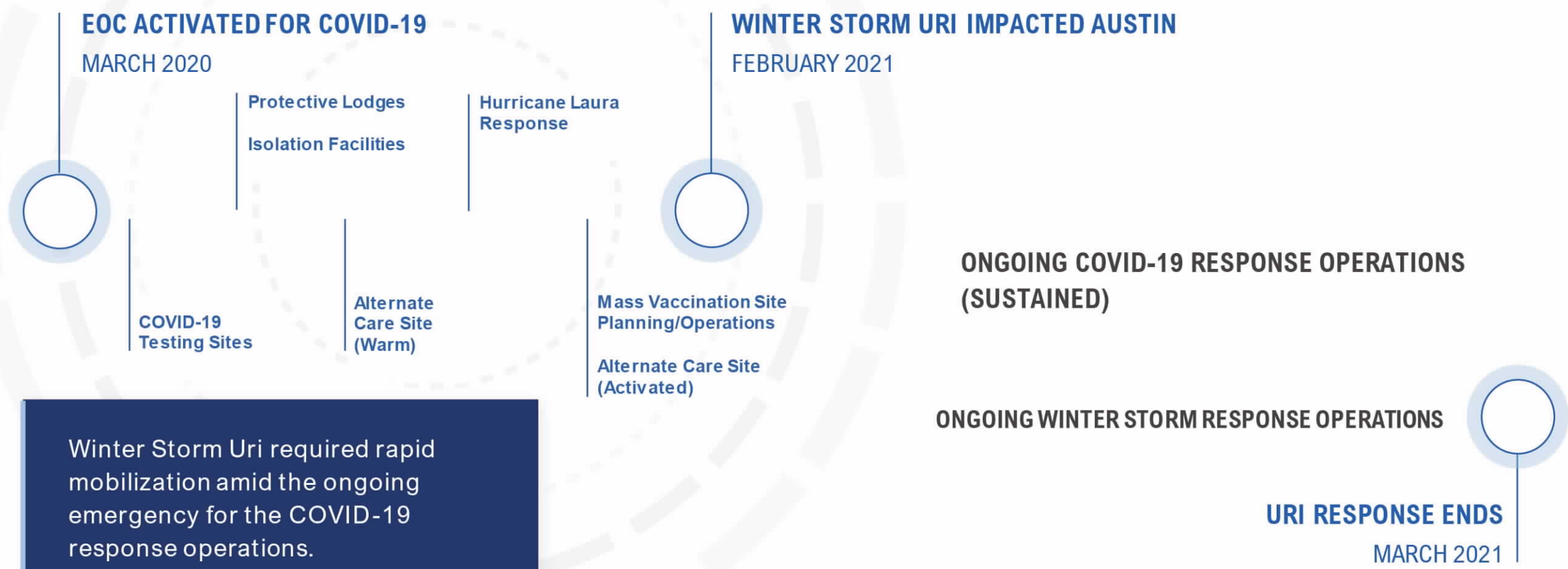






Photo credit: © Austin Fire Department

# 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

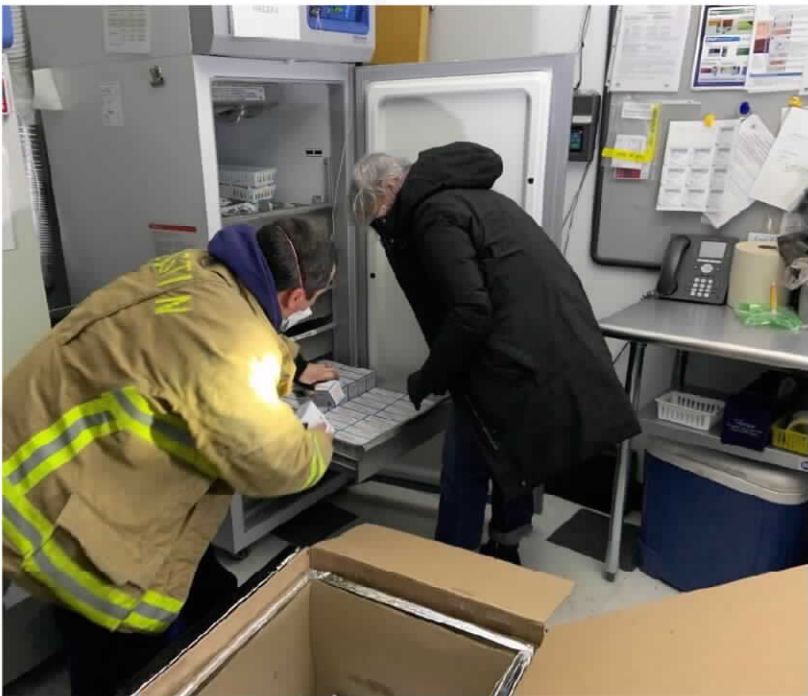


Photo credits fromLeft to Right ©: (top) Austin HSEM, (bottom) Austin Fire Department, ADRN, Austin Energy



## RESOURCES

People  
Supplies  
Services

## RESILIENT SYSTEMS

Utilities  
Shelter  
Equipment

## PLANNING

Mass Care  
Food  
Equity  
Community Engagement

## COMMUNICATION

Preparedness  
Partnerships  
Roles



## 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.



## WHAT ACTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN?

- Implement best practices for utilizing community-based organizations
- Revise disaster plans with considerations for additional non-profits, private sector, and community-based 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.



## WHAT ACTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN?

- 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 multiple-response operations. Support agencies could not provide volunteers due to COVID-19.



## WHAT ACTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN?

- 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.

Photo credit: © Austin Fire Department



## WHAT ACTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN?

- Revise planning assumptions for multiple-hazard 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.

## WHAT ACTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN?

- 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



## WHAT ACTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN?

- 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.

# Actions Taken

## RESOURCES

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- Shared EM position with Austin Water
- Implemented disaster reservist-contactors

## RESILIENT SYSTEMS

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- Initiated Resiliency Hubs program
- Invested in transportation and utility equipment

## PLANNING

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- Updated emergency plans & procedures
- Implemented enhanced EOC and shelter trainings

## COMMUNICATION

- Revised and improved community outreach plan
- Established accessible alert system

# Next Steps

## 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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