

# **Winter storm devastates Texas as power outages continue**

Severe weather is affecting more than 100 million Americans tonight and snow is still falling in the hardest-hit areas in Texas. While power has been restored to millions in Texas, nearly half of residents, 13 million, don't have access to clean, running water.

In the city of Kyle, officials said water should "only be used to sustain life at this point."

In Houston, America's fourth-largest city, there are long lines for food, gas and supplies. Things are also bad in Oklahoma, where President Biden declared a state of emergency after the longest stretch of sub-zero temperatures there on record. At least 34 deaths were attributed to the storm, 20 of them were from Texas.

The winter weather also created a political storm. Texas Senator Ted Cruz was criticized for flying to Cancun with his family this week, while his constituents suffered in record-low temperatures.

## **San Antonio to open water distribution stations**

The San Antonio Water System announced Thursday that it will begin providing water distribution at seven pump locations around the city. Residents will receive up to five gallons per person and are advised to boil the water they receive as a precautionary measure.

The City of San Antonio and the San Antonio Food Bank will also provide bottled water distribution at sites around the city.

San Antonio has experienced water outages due to the winter weather emergency, and the San Antonio Water System on Wednesday issued a boil water advisory for customers who still have access to water. ~April Siese

# **Power restoration to continue into Thursday night**

ERCOT is continuing its power restoration efforts, according to CBS Houston affiliate KHOU. Restoration will continue into Thursday night, and ERCOT told KHOU that its progress has so far come without additional outages.

That could change later on Thursday or Friday morning depending on how stable the grid is as its load increases.

“The generating units that were online this morning have remained on throughout the day. With generation holding steady, we are hopeful that more generation will continue to become available,” ERCOT Senior Director of System Operations Dan Woodfin told KHOU. ~ April Siese

# **Winter storms disrupt COVID vaccine effort as variants fuel new fears**

As Americans yearn for their pre-pandemic lives, the distribution of coronavirus vaccines is hitting delays as winter storms pummel the U.S. The disease has not only impacted how Americans live, but how long. Jonathan Vigliotti reports for “CBS Evening News.” See video [here](#).

# **Winter storm continues to pummel South as freezing temps persist**

CBS New York weathercaster Lonnie Quinn has an updated look at the frigid forecast. See video [here](#).

# **34 deaths tied to the winter storm**

As of Thursday, 34 deaths have been linked to the severe winter weather across seven states.

The most deaths were recorded in Texas, with 20 residents dying from storm-

related incidents. Here's where they occurred: Houston (7), Taylor County (6), Sugarland (4), Galveston County (2) and San Antonio (1).

Earlier this week, a grandmother and three children were killed in a house fire in Sugarland. City officials said the neighborhood had been without power. The cause of the fire is under investigation. ~Zoe Christen Jones

## **“This is a nightmare”: Over 13 million Texans face water crisis**

For many Texans, it's been unbearable. Thousands of homes have been ravaged by the storm. More than 13 million — almost half of the state's population — have water issues.

In many homes, the tap is dry. Finding bottled water is nearly impossible. Some have resorted to boiling *snow*. Houston opened 11 sites Thursday to help give away water.

When the pipes burst in Texas Representative Shawn Thierry's home, her world exploded. She and her 8-year-old daughter are in a hotel, but they won't be able to live there long term.

“I mean this is a nightmare, this is everyone's nightmare,” Thierry told CBS News. “Your home is your abode, it's where you go to find your peace and work and now, I'm uprooted.”

Thierry is among millions in a new phase of misery. As lights come back on, the horrors of the storm are revealed.

Water is everywhere — or nowhere, as many treatment plants were knocked offline. A line to get into a plumbing supply store ran for blocks. Even food has become hard to come by as some grocery store shelves lay bare. ~Janet Shamlian

*Read more here.*

## **Relief groups rush to offer aid in Texas**

Local organizations in Texas are using their resources to help residents in need.

Warming stations across the state are still open and are urging residents to come if their situation becomes dangerous.

Organizations from outside the state are also sending teams to brave the storm. Mercy Chefs, a non-profit based in Portsmouth, Virginia, sent a team to Dallas to provide meals to those without water, gas, heat, or a way to leave their homes.

“This winter storm has affected so many people over such a widespread area in communities that simply aren’t prepared for this kind of weather – we’ve never seen anything like it,” Gary LeBlanc, founder of Mercy Chefs, told CBS News. “We are glad Mercy Chefs can respond quickly and get meals to those in need.” ~Zoe Christen Jones

## **Over 325,000 still without power in Texas**

More than 325,000 Texas residents are still without power, Governor Greg Abbot said in a Thursday news conference.

Abbot promised to reform the state’s power utility, claiming that the Electric Reliability Council of Texas assured him Texas was “ready” for the extreme temperatures.

The state legislature will now investigate the company to find out what went wrong.

“Texans deserve answers about why the shortfalls occurred, and how they’re going to be corrected and Texans will get those answers,” Abbott said Thursday.

## **Some Texas gas stations are running out of fuel**

Texas residents are encouraged to stay home or drive with caution. But those who do leave might have trouble finding gas. The winter storm has slowed down deliveries, leaving some gas stations across northern Texas completely out of fuel, CBS Dallas/Fort Worth reported.

Hundreds of thousands of residents are still without power and have resorted to using their cars for auxiliary power, charging phones, medical devices, or simply

trying to get some heat.

But traveling is still a risky endeavor.

“Certainly what’s important for drivers to know is this is really more of a temporary outage, not a shortage,” AAA Texas Daniel Armbruster told CBS Dallas/Fort Worth. “So it’s really important that drivers not panic, and certainly don’t rush to the gas station to purchase fuel.” ~Zoe Christen Jones



A gas station ran out of gasoline in Euless, Texas, on February 18, 2021. MICHAEL AINSWORTH / AP

## NBA and NHL postpones more games

The severe weather in Texas is forcing major sports leagues to postpone games.

The NBA has postponed Friday’s matchup between the Dallas Mavericks and Houston Rockets after the city of Houston suspended operations at the Toyota Center. The league said the game would be rescheduled for a later date.

The NHL was also forced to postpone Saturday's match between the Tampa Bay Lightning and Dallas Stars at American Airlines Center in downtown Dallas. The league said it is working to re-schedule the four games postponed in Dallas this week. ~Justin Carissimo



A view inside the Toyota Center in Houston on February 11, 2021. CARMEN MANDATO/GETTY

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## **125,000 Louisiana residents without power**

More than 125,000 Louisiana residents are without electricity, Governor John Bel Edwards announced Thursday. Bel Edwards said 20,000 have been without power since Monday but are expected to slowly regain it tonight.

Water service is still being affected, with 98 outages reported and one million people under boil water advisories in the state.

The National Guard has delivered 28,000 bottles of water throughout Louisiana but is still working on distribution sites around Lake Charles, which remains

compromised from Hurricane Laura.

## **Texas energy failure follows years of warnings**

Politicians and power industry officials are blaming each other for the state's outages, but they are not yet able to say how long this will last. Texas has its own power grid, which is managed by state and semi-private entities. Those same groups are now playing the blame game, trying to find how the state failed to keep the lights on for Texans.

Governor Greg Abbott is leaving no one out when it comes to pointing the blame for the state's energy failures. "Whether it be renewable power, such as wind or solar, but also as I mentioned today, access to coal-generated power, access to gas generated power also have been compromised," he said.

For context, in 2020, wind and solar energy were responsible for roughly 25% of the state's electricity generation throughout the year. Meanwhile, natural gas, coal and nuclear power combined for roughly 69%.

Even if wind was a major source, the reason behind that failure is much of the equipment has not been "winterized," which can include using heaters and insulated pipes. That's something places like Minnesota do and their wind turbines don't shut down in the cold.

"The natural gas generators are the ones that we were all counting on to provide the electricity. Some coal plants were supposed to fire up also, and they didn't answer the bell either,"

After a 2011 winter storm in Texas that crippled power, a report recommended winterizing power sources. Ed Hirs, an expert in energy economics and policy at the University of Houston, said the recommendations were not applied.

"The warnings have been there for years and Governor Abbott has done nothing. Before that, Governor (Rick) Perry did nothing. This was a train wreck on the way to happening 10 years ago," Hirs said. ~Omar Villafranca





A utility truck in McKinney, Texas, on February 16, 2021.COOPER NEILL/BLOOMBERG VIA GETTY

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## **New Jersey and New York prepare as new storm barrels in**





A delivery person rides his bicycle in New York City on February 18, 2021. GARY HERSHORN / GETTY IMAGES

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New Jersey residents are stocking up and preparing for power outages as the latest winter storm hits the state. Meanwhile, New York City has already surpassed its typical snow total for the year.

Before this latest snowstorm, New York City had been hit with 33.8 inches of snow this year. The normal seasonal average is 25.8 inches.

“This is not a huge storm, but it is coming on top of the snow we’ve had before. Obviously, a lot of the snow is still around,” said New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio. “What it means is, be careful out there. It means that the evening rush hour is going to be messy. It is going to be slow. We want people to, as much as possible, stay off the roads if you can.

In New Jersey, neighborhoods were scenic but unplowed, as snow accumulated. The township of Freehold saw some of the most snow, on top of what was already on the ground from three weeks of storms. ~Peter Martinez

*Read more at CBS New York.*

## **Texas utility company says its made “significant progress” in restoring power**

The utility company that services most of Texas said it has made “significant progress” in restoring power to residents. There are around 500,000 without power Thursday, down from the 3 million outages earlier this week.

The company, Electric Reliability Council of Texas, said power outages remain in areas likely under three categories: ice storm damage to distribution systems, areas where emergency load shed needs to be restored manually and large industrial facilities that voluntarily went offline.

Dan Woodfin, the utility’s senior director of system operations, said smaller rotating outages may be needed due to the cold temperatures. “We really feel like we’re on the right path,” he said. “We believe they’ll be at the level where they could be rotating outages, not the larger numbers we faced this week.” ~Justin Carissimo

*Read more at CBS Dallas/Fort Worth.*

## **Ted Cruz says he went to Cancun during Texas crisis because he wanted to be a “good dad”**

Senator Ted Cruz flew to Cancun, Mexico, with his family for a trip this week as Texas deals with the aftermath of a winter storm that left millions without power, an airline industry source familiar with the situation told CBS News. The Republican Senator is expected to return on a flight home Thursday afternoon.

Photos of Cruz arriving at the airport for the trip went viral on social media, sparking widespread criticism of the senator for leaving during the emergency. Cruz on Thursday said he wanted to escort his children who were leaving for a trip with friends.

“With school canceled for the week, our girls asked to take a trip with friends. Wanting to be a good dad, I flew down with them last night and am flying back this afternoon,” Cruz said in a statement. The senator said he’s been in “constant communication” with local leaders “to get to the bottom of what happened” in Texas.

“The greatest state in the greatest country in the world has been without power. We have food lines, gas lines, and people sleeping at the neighbors’ houses. Our homes are freezing and our lights are out. Like millions of Texans, our family lost heat and power too.” ~Zoe Christen Jones

*Read more here.*

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