

# 'A Humanitarian Crisis' in Texas: Cold and Snow Put Millions in Danger. 38 Dead

By [Counter Current News](#)

Global Research, February 19, 2021

[Counter Currents](#)

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Environment](#), [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

All Global Research articles **can be read in 27 languages by activating the “Translate Website”** drop down menu on the top banner of our home page (Desktop version).

\*\*\*

*Texas's freeze entered a sixth day on Thursday. At least [31 people have died](#) as of Wednesday afternoon as a result of the severe weather in Texas. But some media reports said, days of glacial weather have left at least 38 people dead in the U.S. The snow made many roads impassable, disrupted coronavirus vaccine distribution and blanketed nearly three-quarters of the continental U.S. And that number is expected to climb with no end to the Texas nightmare in sight.*

Media reports from the U.S. said:

More than [3 million Texans](#) were without power. But some media reports put the number to more than 4 millions. Some have gone four days without electricity after a rare winter storm slammed the U.S. state and created bitterly cold and unlivable conditions. All of the water pipes in many homes are frozen.

Many Texans are fearful for what the near future looks like, some elected officials appear to care less.

Twitter blew up Thursday morning with accusations that Republican Sen. Ted Cruz and his [family flew to Cancun](#) to stay at a resort, and [Associated Press](#) later confirmed the news.

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of Texans don't know when they will get their lights back on or access to running water.

Additionally, on social media, viral videos show apartment complex [pools frozen](#) over, [water rushing](#) into homes from burst pipes, [long lines](#) for grocery stores and cars idling in the streets, unable to get to their destinations.

Power grid operators in Texas say they cannot predict when the outages might end, according to the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, or [ERCOT](#), the agency that oversees the grid.

In an effort to avoid a total blackout, ERCOT is instructing utility companies to cut power to customers.

“We needed to step in and make sure that we were not going to end up with Texas in a blackout, which could keep folks without power — not just some people without power but everyone in our region without power — for much, much longer than we believe this event is going to last, as long and as difficult as this event is right now,” ERCOT CEO Bill Magness said.

Local and federal leaders have left many Texans confused and frustrated with their reluctance to take responsibility for the crisis.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican, blamed ERCOT on Tuesday, saying the utility “has been anything but reliable over the past 48 hours.”

He then appeared on cable news that evening [to argue](#) that the fiasco is due to green energy, specifically frozen wind turbines.

“This shows how the Green New Deal would be a deadly deal for the United States of America,” [Abbott said](#) to Fox News host Sean Hannity. “Our wind and our solar got shut down, and they were collectively more than 10 percent of our power grid, and that thrust Texas into a situation where it was lacking power on a statewide basis. ... It just shows that fossil fuel is necessary.”

The power grid in Texas is unique in that it does not cross state lines and therefore is not under the oversight of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. In the [early 2000s](#), Republican leaders in the state pushed to deregulate the state’s power market and allow power companies to determine when and how to build and maintain power plants. Now this setup and its flaws are coming back to haunt the state.

The mayor of the west Texas town of Colorado City recently resigned from backlash after saying it was not the government’s responsibility to help those suffering.

“No one owes you or your family anything; nor is it the local government’s responsibility to support you during trying times like this!” Tim Boyd wrote on [Facebook](#), based on screenshots from local CBS affiliate KTAB. “Sink or swim, it’s your choice! The City and County, along with power providers or any other service owes you NOTHING!”

For residents going through the blackouts and below freezing temperatures in their homes, the pointing of fingers from elected officials is doing nothing for them in their most desperate time of need.

Thomas Black, 29, from Dallas, posted images of the devastation on his [Twitter page](#) that have now gone viral. In one photo he took in the hallway of his apartment complex, [4-foot icicles](#) hang from an indoor ceiling fan.

“Texans just aren’t used to this sort of thing, so of course there’s going to be panic just like there was at the beginning of COVID,” Black told. “If you go to the grocery store right now, the entire meat section is gone, the whole entire produce section has gone. I’m sure a lot of the nonperishables are gone at this point, and I’m sure the toilet paper’s gone again.”

“The leadership has failed us on all fronts,” he added. “It certainly is worrisome.”

“We are in the middle of a humanitarian crisis and it’s going to take people stepping up from our leadership team to really make a difference in what the future looks like for us,” he

said.

Erica Gittens of San Marcus has been couch surfing since Sunday, when [water came rushing](#) into her apartment while she was talking to her roommate.

“We first thought like, maybe it was the air conditioning starting up,” Gittens said. “And then it’s like, ‘psych, no it’s waterfall.’ Our ceiling started to cave in on us.”

Gittens, who has apartment insurance, says she is unable to get the immediate help she needs because her apartment complex’s corporate office also flooded and the insurance company cannot send or receive the documents that they need. She started a [GoFundMe](#) campaign to help stay afloat in the meantime and said, “It’s going to be weeks” before anything begins to work itself out. For now, she has to depend on friends and strangers.

Gittens says that despite her unfortunate situation, there are others who are doing much worse.

“People may have machines that they have to be hooked up to at night,” she said. “I’m thinking about my residents and how some places may not even be able to have generators due to the freezing. You never know what may happen.”

“This isn’t something that we’re used to. ... We just need to pray for Texas as a whole,” she said.

### **Water Crisis Deepens Misery**

Amid widespread power losses, millions of Texans were also advised to boil their water for safety.

The power crisis spurred by the massive winter storm hobbling Texas has also become a water crisis, with hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses dealing with burst pipes or ordered to boil water, as water utilities suffer from frozen wells and treatment plants run on backup power.

In Harris County, which includes Houston, the nation’s fourth-largest city, more than one million people have been affected by local water systems either that have issued boil-water notices or that cannot deliver water at all, said Brian Murray, a spokesperson for the county emergency management agency.

Residents in the Texas capital, Austin, [were also told to boil water](#) because of a power failure at the city’s largest water-treatment facility.

The city of Kyle, south of Austin, asked residents on Wednesday [to suspend their water use](#) until further notice because of a shortage.

“Water should only be used to sustain life at this point,” officials of the city of 48,000 said in an advisory. “We are close to running out of water supply in Kyle.”

At St. David’s South Austin Medical Center, officials were trying Wednesday night to fix a heating system that was failing because of low water pressure. They were forced to seek

portable toilets and distribute bottles of water to patients and employees so they could wash their hands.

In San Antonio, Jesse Singh, 58, a Shell gas station owner, said that his father, Ram Singh, 80, was turned away from regularly scheduled dialysis treatments Tuesday and Thursday because his clinic was having water issues.

“It’s a dangerous situation,” the younger Mr. Singh said.

His other problems Thursday were indicative of the broader troubles still facing Texas. He said he had low water pressure at his house. His gas station had no fuel to sell and was running out of food at its convenience store because deliveries hadn’t arrived.

Thursday’s winter storm brought freezing rain, snow and temperatures that were “much below average,” a gut punch for Texans who have resorted to stoves, barbecue grills, gasoline generators and their vehicles to keep themselves warm.

There were also reasons for hope on Thursday morning. The state had just under 500,000 customers without power, down from millions in recent days.

Houston’s William P. Hobby Airport, which had been forced to shut down on Wednesday because of water supply issues, [announced](#) early Thursday morning that it had restored water in a limited capacity, and that flights would resume.

Of the 12.5 million utility customers in the state, [490,456 remained without power](#) Thursday morning, according to PowerOutage.us, which records and aggregates live power outage data from utilities.

### **Feed fireplaces**

Even fireplaces have to be fed. To keep two parents, two daughters and two grandmothers from freezing, one person had to spend hours in the afternoon scouring the neighborhood for fallen trees and rotten wood.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is sending generators and other supplies to Texas to help the state cope with power outages after a severe winter storm.

FEMA is also supplying Texas with water, meal and blankets.

Record-low temperatures in Texas and elsewhere have strained power grids and forced millions to reconsider how to stay warm. Now, days after that arctic blast chilled parts of the Central and Southern parts of the U.S., a new problem is emerging: finding water.

For water, some in Texas have turned to a once-unthinkable source: snow.

### **From Mississippi to New York**

The winter storm that swept through Texas has moved to the northeast, causing power outages and slick driving conditions from Mississippi to New York.

Nearly 200,000 Mississippi customers were without power as of Thursday morning, [according to PowerOutage.us](#), and tens of thousands more were without electricity in Louisiana, Alabama, Kentucky, West Virginia and Virginia.

The Carolinas are also bracing for power outages from wind and fallen trees.

The utility company Duke Energy predicted a million customers in the Carolinas could lose power for several days from the storm.

Gov. Roy Cooper issued a state of emergency Wednesday and encouraged people to plan ahead.

“People need to be ready to stay home and be prepared to lose power for a while, especially in the northern, western and Piedmont counties,” he said in a statement.

Winter storm warnings and advisories are in place for parts of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut through Friday night, and heavy snow was already falling in New York City Thursday morning. The city is expected to see several inches of snow.

### **Weather Delays Opening of 2 N.Y.C. Vaccine Sites**

New York mayor Bill de Blasio of New York said city vaccine sites would stay open through Thursday’s snowfall, but the planned opening of two new distribution sites would be pushed back due to nationwide shipping delays.

However, [wind power was not chiefly to blame for the Texas blackouts](#). The main problem was frigid temperatures that stalled natural gas production, which is responsible for the majority of Texas’ power supply.

Science suggests the effects of a warming world have something to do with these sudden bursts of Arctic cold, as well. The cold air at the top of the world, the polar vortex, is usually held in place by the circulating jet stream. The Northern Hemisphere’s warming appears to be weakening the jet stream, and when sudden blasts of heat in the stratosphere punch into the vortex, that Arctic air can spill down into the middle latitudes.

There is also fascinating research that links a warming Arctic to increased frequency of the broad range of extreme winter weather in parts of the United States. It is known as [“warm-Arctic/cold-continents pattern,”](#) a phenomenon that’s still being studied.

### **Cold and Hungry**

James F. McIngvale, a Houston furniture store owner known as “Mattress Mack,” saw his fellow Texans cold and hungry, with little shelter from the winter storm that has ravaged the state and knocked out power to millions.

Mr. McIngvale, 70, opened his doors, and the people came. Since Tuesday, thousands have made the trip to Mr. McIngvale’s Gallery Furniture, spending a few hours on armchairs and couches to warm up, or sleeping on their choice of beds intended. As many as 500 people have chosen to spend the night for the past two nights, he said.

At this impromptu shelter, those in need can eat donated meals or food paid for by Mr. McIngvale.

Texans are also struggling with a lack of clean drinking water.

Rosie May Williams, 48, who said she is homeless, tried to take shelter at a convention

center earlier this week but was told it was over capacity. She was transported by bus to the furniture store, and has slept for the past two nights on a recliner, eating smothered chicken for dinner on one of those nights.

### **Come Up with Own Plans to Survive**

The former mayor of Colorado City in Texas said that residents who are dealing with electricity and water problems because of the winter storm need to “sink or swim” and to come up with their own plans on how to survive, local media stations reported.

“If you don’t have electricity, you step up and come up with a game plan to keep your family warm and safe,” the former mayor, Tim Boyd, wrote in a post on his Facebook page on Tuesday.

“The City and County, along with power providers or any other service owes you NOTHING!” he wrote.

The post was later deleted but [KTXS](#) and local media stations and newspapers republished it.

The posts struck a nerve in a state where hundreds of thousands of people have been without power and water in freezing temperatures for days because of the winter storm.

### **An Old Lady Crossed 6 Miles of Snow**

Last weekend was one of Seattle’s snowiest on record. But Frances H. Goldman had struggled for weeks to book a coronavirus vaccination, so when she got a Sunday appointment, she did not intend to miss it — even if it meant braving the elements alone.

It was too snowy to drive, so Ms. Goldman, 90, [ended up walking a total of six miles through the snow](#) to get the vaccine.

It was a quiet walk, Ms. Goldman said. People were scarce. She caught glimpses of Lake Washington through falling snow. It would have been more difficult, she said, had she not gotten a bad hip replaced last year.

At the hospital, about three miles and an hour from home, she got the jab. Then she bundled up again and walked back the way she had come.

It was an extraordinary effort — but that was not the extent of it. Ms. Goldman, who became eligible for a vaccine last month, had already tried everything she could think of to secure an appointment. She had made repeated phone calls and fruitless visits to the websites of local pharmacies, hospitals and government health departments. She enlisted a daughter in New York and a friend in Arizona to help her find an appointment.

Finally, on Friday, a visit to the Seattle Children’s Hospital website yielded results.

### **Into Mexico**

As the largest energy producing, state in the U.S. Texas grappled with massive refining outages and oil and gas shut-ins that rippled beyond its borders into neighboring Mexico.

The deep freeze has shut in about one-fifth of the nation’s refining capacity and closed oil

and natural gas production across the state.

The outages in Texas also affected power generation in Mexico, with exports of natural gas via pipeline dropping off by about 75% over the last week, according to preliminary Refinitiv Eikon data. Texas Governor Greg Abbott directed the state's natural gas providers not to ship outside Texas and asked state regulators to enforce that ban, prompting reviews.

Abbott's request to the Texas Railroad Commission, the state's oil and gas regulator, set up a game of political football, according to a person familiar with the matter, between groups that do not have the authority to interfere with interstate commerce.

Texas exports gas via pipeline to Mexico and via ships carrying liquefied natural gas (LNG) from terminals in Freeport and Corpus Christi. It also supplies numerous regions of the country, including the U.S. Midwest and Northeast.

The ban prompted a response from officials in Mexico, as U.S. gas pipeline exports to Mexico fell to 3.8 billion cubic feet per day on Wednesday, down from an average over the past 30 days of 5.7 billion, according to data from Refinitiv.

The Mexican government called the top U.S. representative in Mexico on Wednesday to press for natural gas supplies.

Power cuts have hit millions in northern Mexico. Major automobile manufacturers shut operations temporarily because they did not have natural gas needed to operate plants.

About 4 million barrels of daily refining capacity has been shuttered and at least 1 million barrels per day of oil production is out.

The state accounts for roughly one-quarter of U.S. natural gas production. As of Feb. 10, Texas was producing about 7.9 billion cubic feet per day, but that fell to 1.9 billion on Wednesday, according to preliminary data from Refinitiv Eikon.

Several Texas ports, including Houston, Galveston and key LNG exporting sites at Freeport and Sabine Pass were closed due to weather, according to U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officer Jonathan Lally.

### **From Canada**

The freeze has also sent Canadian natural gas exports to the United States soaring to levels last seen in 2010, said IHS Markit analyst Ian Archer.

Net Canadian exports have jumped above 7.5 bcf a day for the last couple of days and Archer estimated they were close to 8 bcf per day on Wednesday.

### **A family with one piece of firewood to keep warm**

A grandmother and three children in Sugar Land, Texas, died in a house fire in an attempt to keep warm.

Massive power outages due to a winter storm has left Texans pleading for help on social media, including one father who revealed his family only had a single piece of firewood left.

Chester Jones shared on TikTok, under the account name @checkjones, on Tuesday a video

of his four children asleep underneath blankets in one room of their home in Dallas, [Texas](#).

In a caption, Mr Jones revealed that the power was off in their home and it was freezing temperatures outside. The family was left with just one piece of firewood to keep them warm through the night.

“Please help me,” he said to other TikTok users.

The video went viral online, giving users a glimpse into what Texans have suffered this week after a massive winter storm brought snow and freezing temperatures to the state.

Mr. Chester’s post about his family’s situation has garnered more than 6.6 million views, as of Thursday morning. The Red Cross commented on the TikTok, saying, “Please stay safe! If you need somewhere to go for warmth, visit [www.redcross.org/shelter](http://www.redcross.org/shelter) to find an open shelter or warming centre near you.”

He later updated his followers that several people who saw his TikTok reached out and donated more firewood for his family to use in order to stay warm.

*Featured image courtesy of Counter Currents*

The original source of this article is [Counter Currents](#)  
Copyright © [Counter Current News](#), [Counter Currents](#), 2021

---

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Counter Current News](#)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)

[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)