

EPA Winter Storms Uri and Viola

Update #2

February 18, 2021

INCIDENT OVERVIEW

Beginning February 14, 2021, Winter Storms Uri and Viola brought dangerous cold/freezing rain/snow throughout much of the state of Texas with life-threatening wind-chill temperatures and hazardous travel conditions from ice and snow. Due to the storms, multiple drinking water facilities across the state have lost power or pressure. EPA is working with federal and state partners to respond to the impacts of these storms.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- As of February 18, 2021, EPA has received a total of 95 National Response Center (NRC) reports in EPA's Area of Responsibility (AOR) related to Winter Storms Uri and Viola, of these 71 are air releases.
- On February 18, 2021, the Office of Communities, Tribes and Environmental Assistance (OCTEA) forwarded approved messages from the Headquarters (HQ) Office of Public Affairs and Office of Water regarding drinking water safety to stakeholders.
- OCTEA also forwarded Winter Storm Update #1 to EJ Stakeholders in Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma. A reminder was sent to stakeholders to make EPA aware if they were seeing adverse environmental impacts from the cold weather events.
- On February 18, 2021, OCTEA contacted the Region 6 Tribal FEMA liaison and was informed that no tribal partners issued emergency orders due to the weather. OCTEA was further informed that many tribal members in Oklahoma were without water due to outages at their local public water supply (PWS). These PWS are overseen by ODEQ.
- The following updates on air monitoring were received by EPA:
 - LDEQ reported that they had power failures at two air monitoring stations.
 - TCEQ reported that they had power failures or communication issues at 39 air monitoring stations, 14 of which were located in the Houston area.
 - NMED reported that they had power failure at one station, however they were able to return all monitors at the station to operation on February 17.
 - ODEQ reported that they have experienced only minor power outage. Due to hazardous travel conditions, they have lost some particulate and lead samples and 14-day quality control checks could not be performed.
- As of February 18, 2021, no fuel waiver requests have been received.
- TCEQ is reporting 54 petrochemical facilities are shut-down and 11 facilities in partially shutdown.
- The Office of External Affairs edited and distributed Management Report #1 to Congressional Members and the OCTEA for distribution to stakeholders.
- The Office of External Affairs posted on the R6 public web page information "Safety During Winter Storm Uri" in English, Spanish and Vietnamese. This was shared with EJ management for stakeholder distribution.

- On February 16, 2021, the Office of External Affairs issued a press release entitled “EPA Urges Those Affected by Power Outages to Avoid Indoor Air Dangers, Use Generators Safely.”
- As of February 18, 2021 at 1145 hours, the State of Texas reported drinking water system impacts in 153 counties. A total of 282 systems are either non- or partially-operational, impacting a population of 365,289. In addition 762 drinking water systems have issued a Boil Water Notice, impacting a population of 13,624,591.
- As of February 18, 2021 at 1145 hours, the State of Texas reported 42 wastewater systems with issues (including 6 partially operational and 24 not operational).
- As of 1200 hours on February 18, 2021, the State of Louisiana reports 98 systems currently experiencing water outages affecting a population 245,676. In addition, 235 systems were under a Boil Water Notice affecting a population of 1,167,041. Louisiana has not reached out to EPA for assistance at this time.
- As of 1400 hours on February 18, 2021, the State of Oklahoma reported 118 public drinking water systems and 22 wastewater systems impacted by the storms. Oklahoma has not reached out to EPA for assistance at this time.
- As of February 18, 2021, the State of Arkansas reported 4 systems under a Boil Water Notice. Arkansas has not reached out to EPA for assistance at this time.
- Beginning on February 18, 2021, EPA initiated Phase 1 – Rapid Response Assessment for Superfund Sites that may have been impacted due to storm related power outages. The Region 6 Remedial Project Managers are coordinating with the state agencies, tribal governments, site operators, site contractors, and/or potentially responsible parties to conduct post-storm communications and assessments. Assessments for 1 site in Louisiana, 1 site in Arkansas, and 13 sites in Texas are underway.
- A Force Majeure request has been received by the State of Arkansas from the City of Fort Smith, AR.

SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS

- EPA Superfund and Water staff provided a list of drinking water laboratories able to analyze Total Coliform samples to TCEQ on February 17, 2021.
- EPA contacted its emergency response technical assistance contractor (START) and asked them to prepare to contract with laboratories for drinking water analysis if needed.

COORDINATION WITH STATE AGENCIES

- Region 6 provided comments to TCEQ on a draft Resource Request for federal assistance. The request is for federal assistance with analyzing drinking water samples at certified labs for total coliforms and providing bulk potable water to hospitals and Public Water Supplies (PWSs).
- FEMA, EPA and the US Army Corps of Engineers held a conference call to discuss TCEQ’s resource request and which agency is best suited to respond to the request.

MISSION ASSIGNMENTS

- No mission assignments have been received at this time.

EPA RESOURCES

Winter Storms Uri and Viola				
Personnel	REOC Dallas	FEMA Denton	Houston	Total
R6*	6	0	2	8
START	0	0	0	0
Total	6	0	2	8

*working virtually