



January  
2012

Austin Utilities  
2012 Board of  
Commissioners

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Austin Utilities  
Office will be  
closed  
January 16th,  
in observance  
of  
Martin Luther  
King, Jr. Day

# Connections

*Strengthening our Community...*

*one customer at a time!*

## What to do if the power goes out

Power outages can occur for a variety of reasons. For example, winds, ice, animals, auto accident and failure of equipment can damage the electrical equipment that delivers power to your home.

Outages can be short or long-lived. What caused the outage, the location of damaged equipment and how quickly we can gain access to make repairs all affect how long the outage will last. While our crews work as quickly as possible to restore power, it is important for you to be prepared if you are without power for any length of time.

### Be Prepared

- Clear away snow accumulating around outside venting systems.
- Keep a battery-operated radio, flashlight, and batteries on hand; using candles or oil-burning lamps increase fire risk. In a widespread outage, rely on radio broadcasts to learn more about the power outage.
- Keep refrigerator doors shut to prevent food spoilage.

- Dress in layered clothing for warmth.
- Keep Austin Utilities telephone number 433-8886 posted near your telephone and contact us to report any outages. (Note: Cordless phones do not work without power.)

### Be Safe

- Never use your natural gas oven to heat your home.
- If you have a backup generator, schedule a pre-season inspection with a licensed electrical contractor. Follow the manufacturer's guidelines for safe operation and to safeguard those working to restore power in your neighborhood.
- When using a backup generator, be certain this is completely isolated from the normal power system. An approved transfer switch installed by a licensed electrician is the best way to insure safe generator operation.
- Stay away from downed power lines and any damaged electrical equipment.

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## Conserve & Save® Rebates

Thank you for your participation in the 2011 Conserve & Save® rebate program. Just a reminder that all qualifying Electric, Gas, & Water rebate applications must be turned in by March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012 to receive a rebate. Applications are available online at [www.austinutilities.com](http://www.austinutilities.com), in our office at 400 4<sup>th</sup> St NE or contact Dave Thompson at 507-433-8886.

## Programmable Thermostats

Programmable thermostats automatically adjust your home's temperature settings, allowing you to save energy while you're away or sleeping. They:

- Are more convenient and accurate than manual thermostats and improve your home's comfort.
- Contain no mercury.
- save energy and save money on utility bills — when used properly, about \$180/year.
- are better for the environment, since using less energy helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with energy production.

Programmable thermostats earn the Energy Star® label by meeting strict

## Prevent frozen pipes

Don't fall into a winter cold snap unprepared. Prevent property damage, repair bills, and the inconvenience of bursting household pipes by following the suggestions below.

- ◆ Know the location of your water shut-off valve and regularly test it. In most single-family homes, the shut-off valve is in the basement or crawl space on a wall facing the street.
- ◆ Turn off and drain automatic and manual sprinkler systems.
- ◆ Insulate water pipes that may be vulnerable to the cold or have posed problems before. Pipes close to exterior walls or in unheated basements can be wrapped with pieces of insulation. Don't overlook pipes near windows, which can quickly freeze. For particularly difficult pipes, consult a professional on how to select and apply heat tape. Improper insulation can cause fires. If you need help, hire a qualified contractor.
- ◆ Seal leaks that allow cold air inside, near where pipes are located. Look for air leaks around electrical wiring, dryer vents and pipes. Use caulk or insulation to keep the cold out and the heat in. With severe cold, a tiny opening can let

energy efficiency guidelines set by the government. These units save energy by offering four convenient, pre-programmed temperature settings (settings that try to anticipate when it's convenient for you to scale back on heating or cooling.)

If you are like many homeowners and work outside the home during the day and have a different schedule on the weekend, a programmable thermostat can offer many benefits, and the return on your investment is usually within one year.

Austin Utilities also offers rebates and incentives on energy efficient appliances. For more information, you can contact Dave Thompson, Residential Account Representative at 433-8886 or go to our website located at [www.austinutilities.com](http://www.austinutilities.com).

in enough cold air to cause a pipe to freeze.

- ◆ Crack a faucet farthest from the place where your water enters the home. A very slow drip will keep water molecules moving, reducing the chance that pipes will freeze. Don't forget to place a bucket underneath the faucet so the water can be saved for other household uses.
- ◆ Don't take chances. If you turn on your faucets and nothing comes out, leave the faucets turned on and call a plumber. If you detect that your water pipes have frozen and burst, turn off the water at the main shut-off valve in the house; leave the water faucets turned on. (Make sure everyone in your family knows where the water shut-off valve is and how to open and close it.)
- ◆ Never try to thaw a pipe with a torch or other open flame. Water damage is preferable to burning down your house. You may be able to thaw a frozen pipe with the warm air from a hair dryer. Start by warming the pipe as close to the faucet as possible, working toward the coldest section of pipe.

Austin Utilities would like to remind all natural gas customers of the importance of removing snow and ice from around their gas meter. Accumulations of snow and ice can cause serious damage to the gas meter and could result in temporary loss of natural gas supply to a customers home or business. Additionally, removal of snow and ice allows meter readers the ability to accurately and efficiently read each meter.

According to Minnesota State Mechanical, Fuel Gas and Plumbing Code, unvented room heaters and unvented decorative appliances shall not be installed in any dwelling or occupancy. The use of these types of heaters is not approved for use by any Austin Utilities natural gas customer.

Installation of any new or additional gas burning appliance to existing gas piping in a building requires an inspect from Austin Utilities. For your safety, contact Austin Utilities Gas Department at 433-8886 to schedule an inspection at no cost.

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