

Austin freeze checklist

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Why prepare: Camp Mabry logged 16 nights at or below 20°F in the six winters since 2020-21, versus 10 in the 25 winters before (NOAA NCEI daily records).

Median first freeze: Dec. 3 at Camp Mabry, Nov. 16 at Austin-Bergstrom airport.

1. By November 1

- ☐ Find your main shutoff valve (Austin Water: usually on your side of the meter, in the meter box).
- ☐ Buy a water meter key and test that the valve turns. Renters: ask your property manager where it is.
- ☐ Insulate pipes in the attic, garage, crawl space and exterior walls; cover outside faucets.
- ☐ Turn off and drain automatic sprinklers; disconnect and store garden hoses.

2. When a freeze is forecast

- ☐ Drip faucets fed by exposed pipes; open cabinet doors under sinks on exterior walls.
- ☐ Keep garage doors closed if water lines run through the garage.
- ☐ Leaving town? Turn off water at the meter and set the thermostat to 65°F or higher (Austin Water).

3. When the forecast low is 20°F or colder

- ☐ Keep the heat on, at least 55°F (State Farm), and let both hot and cold water trickle.
- ☐ Pipes in uninsulated attics and exterior walls are most at risk below 20°F (State Farm).
- ☐ Know who can shut off your water if a pipe bursts while you are away.

4. If a pipe freezes or bursts

- ☐ No water at the tap: leave the faucet open. Thaw with a hair dryer, heating pad or warm towels; never a flame.
- ☐ Burst pipe: shut off water at the main valve, leave faucets open, stay clear of electrical appliances in standing water.
- ☐ Contact your insurer and a licensed plumber. Not on Austin Water? Use the guidance from the utility on your bill.

Sources: NOAA NCEI GHCN-Daily and 1991-2020 Normals (USW00013958 Camp Mabry, USW00013904 Austin-Bergstrom); Austin Water Cold Weather Tips; State Farm newsroom frozen-pipe releases (2022, 2024, 2026).

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