

Stewardship: We conduct our business in a manner that is reflective and protective of the public trust in us as stewards of the university's facilities.

Part of the Values at Work Series

Stewardship in the Face of the Storm

Neither snow nor ice nor cold could stop Facilities Services' support of The University of Texas at Austin when a record-breaking winter storm hit the area in mid-February 2021. That's because we see our stewardship role as "mission critical." We must keep the campus safe and running, even when faced with extreme weather, even when the university is officially closed, and even during the long-standing COVID-19 pandemic that stormed across the globe. In other words, facing a crisis on top of a crisis.

For Facilities Services (FS), the value of service means, "We focus our unconditional efforts to best serve our clients." This photo album story is an example of one of those "unconditional" times, and it shows our commitment to serve, which includes responding to a crisis. It also shows how we value collaborating with our campus partners and exceeding expectations by developing innovative solutions for our clients.

Responsive Commitment and Teamwork

As [this photo album](#) shows, our teams responded to the storm emergency calls and safety of the campus in multiple ways and at all hours of the day or night—many working long shifts. Weather conditions were harsh, with the extreme cold and snow and ice blanketing the campus.

The Facilities Service Center and the after-hours Facilities Control and Monitoring System (FCMS) teams handled the emergency calls, providing 24/7 coverage. Facilities Operations and Maintenance (FOM) technicians responded to various issues, such as a ruptured water line at Computational Research Building, low-temperature safety at Texas Swimming Center, a roof flood alarm at UT Administration Building, and a ruptured coil at Texas Memorial Stadium-East. They collaborated with Utilities and Energy Management and other teams as needed.

Tim Dunn, a member of the after-hours FCMS team, shared his unique experience during the storm.

"While I can safely say that week wasn't 'fun' for any of us, I was honored to be part of the team that handled emergencies across the entire campus and up at the Pickle Research Center," Dunn said. "FOM and FCMS do a great deal of work that oftentimes is taken for granted, but we were here regardless and proved just how essential we are to the very foundation of the University. From us here in FCMS sleeping on the office floor five days in a row, to techs having to sleep in

their zone shops, we got it done. I am also blown away by and deeply appreciative of the impeccable guidance and vigilance shown by my superiors. I would especially like to give a shout out to Zach Adcock, Brian Stokes, Tommy Crawford, and Rickie Rieck for demonstrating fantastic leadership qualities. Without them, our success in handling this freeze would have been a very different story. The events of that week demonstrated how dedicated UT's employees are, and I'm humbled to work with such excellent folks. I certainly hope we don't have to deal with something like this anytime soon but if we do...I know we'll be ready again."

Custodial Services teams were doing their part as well, as Manager Dave Stevens reports in an email about their response.

"Custodial Services had a small team of volunteers that remained on campus duty 24 hours a day throughout the weather event. Brandon Page, Gabriella Posadas, and Johnathan Lozano (brand new to Custodial Services) responded to every call for water mediation, often traveling on foot because vehicles were not functioning in the extreme cold. In some cases, since elevators were down, they had to carry equipment up and down stairs, all in the cold, wet, and hazardous conditions. They were able to overcome the cold, fatigue, and loss of sleep (for fear of missing an emergency call) and prevented further damage to university property. The majority of the Custodial Services work force returned to campus on Saturday, February 20, and February 22 and 23 to check buildings for damage and prepare the campus for re-opening."

Landscape Services teamed up with Project Management and Construction Services' General Construction and arrived on campus early on to clear the way throughout campus, shoveling snow and ice. Ruben Castillo, a landscape crew leader, was one of the first staff to get to campus because of his proximity to work (he walked in).

"The good Lord willing," said Castillo, "I am always happy to come to work and serve the University. Whatever it takes to get the job done, no matter what the conditions."

A team with Event and Moving Services responded to the need for drinking water by helping to distribute water bottles to key locations such as the Texas Union after the boil water notice was issued by the City of Austin. And Landscape Services' Urban Forestry team used their expertise to protect the university's trees before, during and after the storm ([see the FAS News story](#)).

Excellence through innovation: Stewardship goes beyond being responsive and collaborative. Sometimes when an issue is more complicated or will take longer to fix, we search for innovative solutions that provide a quicker turnaround, even if it's for the short term. We understand that we support a world-class university, where research that solves problems and changes the world can't wait for months on end. After the storm, Facilities Services worked with campus partners from Project Management and Construction Services and Utilities and Energy Management to develop a temporary yet safe solution to replace an air handler unit at the Norman Hackerman Building, drastically reducing the 3-4 months it would have taken to bring the building back into operation.

During a recent faculty meeting, Interim Executive Vice President Provost Daniel Jaffe shared a shout-out and round of applause to our Zone 1 Maintenance Operations team for their efforts and response to the issues from the freeze.

FS Director Darren Hale expressed his gratitude for the commitment of his team.

“I was so impressed and proud of the sacrifice, determination, and dedication of the FS team before, during, and after the storm,” said Hale. “So many gave selflessly to minimize damage to the university and numerous team members came in to get campus operational again. The Facilities Services team truly takes care of campus like they own it!”

Facilities Services remains diligent when it comes to supporting the university’s mission. After the university was reopened, we stood proud when the president of the university called for the UT Tower to be lit burnt orange in recognition of the determined spirits that make our campus strong and enduring. Our team will continue to provide our unconditional efforts to best serve our clients. And when the Texas summer heat returns, we’ll be ready! View photos of the campus and FS workers during and after the winter storm on [Flickr](#).

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