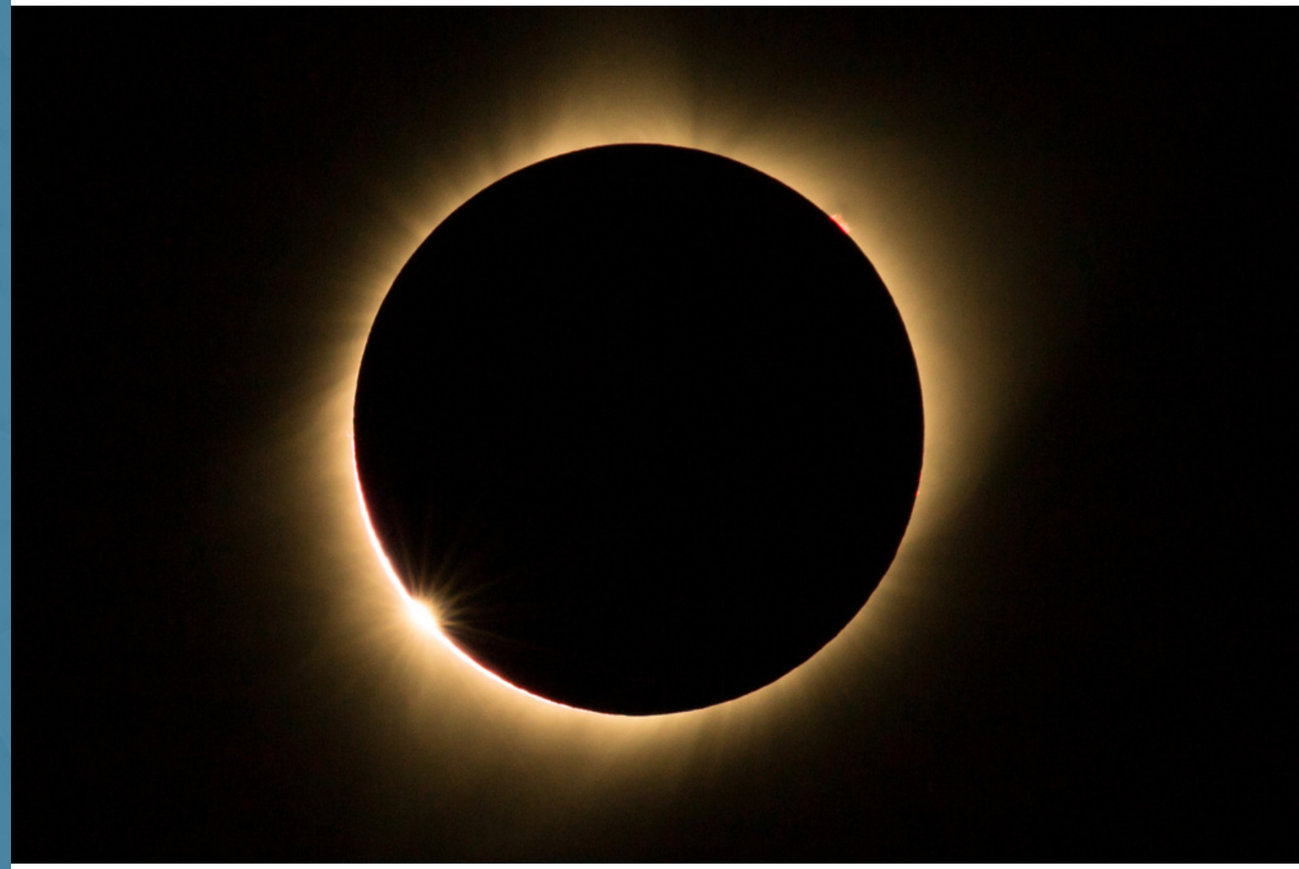
Texas Solar Eclipses - Fact Sheet

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension



Annular Solar Eclipse Begins:

Saturday, October 14, 2023
from 10:23 a.m. to 1:33 p.m. CT

Annular Eclipse visible at 11:54 a.m.
for 4 minutes and 21 seconds
from San Antonio, Texas

Total Solar Eclipse Begins:

Monday, April 8, 2024
from 12:15 p.m. to 2:56 p.m. CT

Total Eclipse visible at 1:32 p.m.
for 4 minutes and 25 seconds
from Kerrville, Texas

What You Can Expect:

Expect delays. Traffic backups are inevitable. Preparation ensures less frustration for visitors and residents alike.

Expect traffic changes. Normal travel paths may be disrupted.

Be prepared. If traveling, plan for your basic needs such as food, water, fuel for your vehicle, and bathroom breaks in case you are stuck in traffic.

Do what you can to HELP. Can you work from home or flex your work schedule when local roadways are full? Avoid roads being used to get people in or out of a local event.

Look out for each other. This is a rare opportunity, but it brings potential hazards. We must all do our part to be prepared. You may see travelers who are unfamiliar with the area. Be friendly, helpful, and patient.

If you have a fender bender, do not call 911 unless there are injuries, dangers, or leaking fluids. Move your vehicles safely to the side of the road and exchange insurance information.

Be mindful of Texas's "move over" law. Drivers in Texas are required to move over a lane or slow to 20 mph below the posted speed limit when approaching emergency vehicles, law enforcement, tow trucks, utility service vehicles, TxDOT vehicles, or other highway construction or maintenance vehicles using visual signals or flashing lights activated on the roadside. On roadways with posted speed limits of 25 mph or less, drivers must reduce their speed to 5 mph (Texas Transportation Code 545.157).

Keep emergency vehicles in mind when parking. Maintaining room for emergency vehicles is critical during large scale events such as the eclipse. Inside the city limits, parking in your driveway or on your own property will help ensure first responders will not be impeded by parked vehicles on their way to an emergency call. In the county, this can be accomplished by parking completely off the paved portion of the roadway.

With so many people gathering in our rural areas to witness this monumental event, here are some tips to make sure the eclipse event is fun and safe for everyone.

- Do not trespass on private property.
- Do not trespass on public properties that are closed. Do not park in fire lanes or block driveways or roadways; doing so could hamper first responders from reaching those in need.
- Parking will be limited. Determine if there is public transportation where you plan to visit or be ready for long walks to where you are headed.
- Do not litter. This includes leaving trash or debris on either public or private property as well as throwing away any garbage from a vehicle.

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What do Texans Need to Know?

Local Residents

The last solar eclipse on August 21, 2017 was best seen in a direct path from Oregon to South Carolina. Some counties, like Hart County, Kentucky, saw an increase in traffic by +222%, straining available county resources. Tennessee saw more than 1 million visitors to the state for the 2017 eclipse event. It is reasonable to believe that the impending eclipse will increase visitors and traffic in Texas, and the public will need to be aware and plan accordingly.

Be aware of the possibility of weather events and follow preparedness and safety guidance received from state, county, and local authorities.

1) Prepare for heavier than normal traffic on the roads, as well as at restaurants, gas stations, grocery and retail stores. Allow extra time to get to and from areas due to traffic delays.
2) Avoid distracted driving. The urge to view the eclipse will be strong and should not be done when driving. Defensive driving is required due to the increase in motorists and the possibility for distracted driving.

Advance considerations during the heaviest congestion periods:

1) Schedule errands and appointments 2-3 days prior to the eclipse.
2) Some services and businesses may be closed or have limited hours during the event. By scheduling your errands early, you can beat the crowds and give local businesses time to restock before eclipse visitors arrive. This includes grocery shopping, doctor/dentist appointments, picking up prescriptions, and banking necessities.
3) Consider filling up your gas tank a few days prior to the event to avoid possible long lines or fuel shortages.
4) With the increased number of visitors, local public safety officials anticipate cellular service may become overwhelmed and limited access may be available, especially during the eclipse event.
5) Know when it is appropriate to call 911 (true emergencies) and have the non-emergency phone number for your local Dispatch Center programmed into your phone ahead of time.

Boater safety: If you plan to be on the water during the eclipse, make sure that your boat has proper lighting. Be aware of your surroundings leading up to the eclipse. Keep a safe distance between yourself and other boaters.

Individual/Family Emergency Plans: Consider the eclipse event to be an opportunity to check your emergency kits and emergency plans. Develop a communication plan with family and friends just in case you lose or have limited cellular service. If you only have a mobile phone, find out which of your neighbors have a land-line number in case you need to call 911 for an emergency.

What to Bring with You:

- Eclipse viewing glasses
- Large amounts of drinking water
- First Aid Kit
- Necessary medications for you and your pets
- Cash (ATMs may be limited during this time)
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Hat/Visor
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Folding chairs
- Jacket or sweatshirt (Texas weather is unpredictable)
- Snacks/food
- Map / directions of the area. *Print these directions and bring them with you because cellular service may be limited during heaviest impact times*

Visitors/Out of Town Guests:

Visitors must be prepared and ensure they have supplies available for the event. This includes cash, fuel, meals, etc. Businesses may have limited hours of availability and depleted supplies due to high demand.

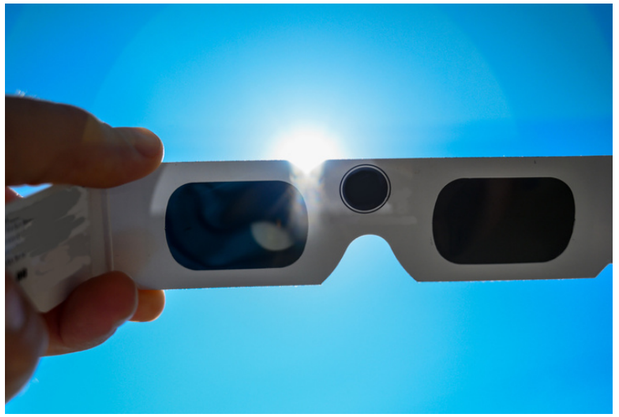
1) Arrive at your destination well in advance of the eclipse event. Do not take photographs or attempt to watch the event while driving.
2) Ensure that vehicles/RV has recently been serviced and that you are fueled up and ready to go (gas, propane, etc.).
3) Develop a strong communication plan with family members. Cell service may be limited due to the volume of calls during the event. Designate an out-of-area friend or family member that can be a point of contact if you are separated. Choose a landmark where family can reunite if you get separated in a crowd.
4) Valuables should not be left in vehicles. Determine how you will keep your valuables secure (cell phones, telescopes, binoculars, wallets, etc.) Lock vehicles any time you are not inside it.

Industries/Business

Businesses should be prepared for an increase in customers, as well as the needs of staff members.

- Ensure needed supplies are available in advance of the eclipse event. Consider extending hours of operation to meet customer needs, and have a back-up plan if staff is delayed due to traffic.
- Encourage employees to think ahead about traffic, resources (cash, gas), and childcare needs. Make sure your staff can get to work and give them reminders to plan ahead.
- If your business uses cellular or wireless service for transactions, prepare for a back-up plan. State officials anticipate a high demand for cellular service during the impact period. Transactions may be slower at this time.
- Be prepared for more cash transactions just in case automated services are down. Consider having extra tills set up to accommodate these additional cash transactions. You may have larger than normal deposits over the weekend, so check ahead with your bank for hours of operation.
- Due to possible cellular service disruptions, visitors may have urgent requests to use your landline business phone. Decide how you will handle these requests, and make sure employees know what to do. If a 911 emergency arises, you may need to use the landline.
- Evaluate your delivery schedule on the day of the eclipse. This may be significantly delayed due to the overwhelming number of vehicles on the road.
- Have a plan to address visitors who park or camp in unauthorized locations. Expect customers whose primary interest is in the use of business restroom facilities. Public restrooms may be in short supply.
- Weather conditions may dictate visitor behavior. If conditions are cloudy, “day-trippers” may move to a location with better viewing conditions. Determine in advance how you will handle cancellations. Monitor the weather conditions at least 1 week to 10 days prior to the eclipse.

Eye Protection During Eclipse Viewing



Experts stress that the only safe way to look directly at the sun, except at the brief phase of totality (in the path of totality), is using a special-purpose solar filter, popularly known as eclipse glasses. Eclipse glasses block more UV rays than everyday sunglasses, protecting your retinas from burning even when you feel no discomfort looking at the sun through shades. This is the only safe way to view the uneclipsed or partially eclipsed Sun.

Homemade filters or ordinary sunglasses, even very dark glasses, are not safe for looking directly at the Sun. Eclipse glasses and hand-held solar viewers should meet theISO 12312-2 international standards.

An alternative method for safe viewing of the partially eclipsed Sun is pinhole projection. For example, cross the outstretched, slightly open fingers of one hand over the outstretched, slightly open fingers of the other. With your back to the Sun, look at your hands’ shadow on the ground. The little spaces between your fingers will project a grid of small images on the ground, showing the Sun as a crescent during the partial phases of the eclipse. Additional eye safety tips can be found on NASA’s website.

Do NOT look at the uneclipsed or partially eclipsed Sun through an unfiltered camera, telescope, binoculars, or other optical device.

Travel & Parking

While the number of eclipse visitors is hard to estimate, both residents and visitors should expect increased activity on roadways, in neighborhoods, in public facilities, restaurants, parks, and retail stores. Hotels, short-term rentals, and campgrounds will be at peak capacity.

The large influx of people expected to visit Texas during this eclipse event will have a huge impact on highways, gasoline supply, and other basic needs. What you do to plan ahead will help your eclipse-viewing experience.