

## 2015 Emergency Water Conservation Regulation Frequently Asked Questions

On March 17, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board or Board) adopted an expanded [emergency conservation regulation](#) to safeguard the state's remaining water supplies as California enters a fourth consecutive dry year. While there are many ways to boost local water supplies, conservation is the easiest, most efficient, and most cost effective way to quickly reduce water demand and extend supplies into the next year, providing flexibility for all California communities. With our inability to predict the remainder of this rainy season or the next, water saved today can improve a region's water security and add flexibility to systems that may need to withstand another year or more of warm temperatures and low precipitation.

The enhanced emergency conservation regulation targets both individual water use, by identifying the practices from which every Californian should abstain during this drought emergency, as well as the steps that local water suppliers should be taking to reduce water demand in their service areas. These updated restrictions set a minimum level of effort in this continuing drought emergency. Everyone should take additional steps to conserve water. As the drought wears on, the State Water Board will closely watch local implementation of the regulation, and will take further action as needed.

### 1. What types of water use are prohibited for all Californians?

The 2015 emergency conservation regulation prohibits:

- Using potable water to wash sidewalks and driveways;
- Allowing runoff when irrigating with potable water;
- Using hoses with no shutoff nozzles to wash cars;
- Using potable water in decorative water features that do not recirculate the water; and
- **New** Irrigating outdoors during and within 48 hours following measureable rainfall

### 2. Are businesses required to conserve water as well?

Yes, the prohibitions above apply to businesses and residents. In addition, the 2015 emergency regulation also focuses on the restaurant and hospitality sector:

- **New** Restaurants are prohibited from serving water to their customers unless the customer requests it; and
- **New** Hotels and motels must offer their guests the option to not have their linens and towels laundered daily, and prominently display this option in each guest room.

- Restaurants are also encouraged to use table cards to help convey the conservation message. Table card templates are available for download at the Save Our Water website at: <http://saveourwater.com/for-water-agencies/toolkit/>. Local water suppliers may also be able to provide similar materials.

### **3. Do water suppliers have to implement conservation measures?**

Yes, there are requirements for both large urban water suppliers serving more than 3,000 customers, as well as small water suppliers serving fewer than 3,000 customers.

Large urban water suppliers (serving >3000 connections) must:

- Impose restrictions on outdoor irrigation;
- Notify customers about leaks that are within the customer's control;
- Report on water use monthly; and
- Report on compliance and enforcement

Small water suppliers (serving <3000 connections) must:

- Limit outdoor irrigation to two days per week **or** comparable measures to achieve a 20 percent reduction in water use.

### **4. Are there limitations on outdoor watering?**

Yes, the regulations limit the number of days per week that outdoor irrigation is allowed. Urban water suppliers with water shortage contingency plans can rely on limitations in their plans if they exist. Plans with no limitations must restrict outdoor watering to two days per week.

### **5. Can water shortage contingency plans be amended to impose day-per-week restrictions in lieu of implementing the two-day-per-week backstop?**

Yes, the regulations allow for the local amendment of the plans.

### **6. Is everyone required to limit outdoor watering to two days per week?**

No, the regulations rely on the days-per-week limitations contained on local water shortage contingency plans. If these plans do not contain limitations, then a two-day-per-week restriction must be implemented. Smaller water suppliers that are not required to have water shortage contingency plans have the option of implementing the two-day-per-week restriction or comparable conservation measures designed to achieve a 20 percent reduction in water use.

### **7. How do I report water waste?**

Water waste should be reported to the water supplier for the service area. The State Water Board's conservation website contains a simple tool to find the contact information for the water supplier based on the location of the alleged wasteful activity. The tool is located at:

[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water\\_issues/programs/drought/water\\_supplier.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/drought/water_supplier.shtml).

**8. Who can enforce the prohibitions?**

Violations of prohibited activities are considered infractions and are punishable by fines of up to \$500 for each day in which the violation occurs. Any peace officer or employee of a public agency charged with enforcing laws and authorized to do so by ordinance may issue a citation to the violator. The State Water Board can issue cease and desist orders against water agencies that don't impose mandatory outdoor irrigation restrictions upon their retail customers. Water suppliers that violate cease and desist orders are subject to civil liability of up to \$10,000 a day.

**9. Who makes sure that the water suppliers are doing their part?**

The State Water Board has been tracking the implementation of conservation measures by large urban water suppliers. Information on their progress along with the status of their enforcement efforts is available on the website at:

[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water\\_issues/programs/drought/conservation\\_report\\_info.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/drought/conservation_report_info.shtml). With more than 2,500 smaller water agencies not subject to reporting requirements, compliance checking is more challenging but is a priority for 2015.

**10. Where can I find the monthly reports and conservation results submitted by the urban water suppliers?**

The reports can be found on the State Water Board's website at:

[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water\\_issues/programs/drought/conservation\\_report\\_info.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/drought/conservation_report_info.shtml). Information on the regulation can be found at:  
[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water\\_issues/programs/drought/emergency\\_regulations\\_waterconservation.shtml](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/drought/emergency_regulations_waterconservation.shtml).

**11. When does the regulation go into effect?**

The regulation goes into effect immediately upon approval by the Office of Administrative Law and filing with the Secretary of State. The effective date of the regulation is March 27, 2015.

**12. How long is the regulation in effect for?**

The regulation will be in effect for 270 days unless extended by the State Water Board.

For more information, visit the [Emergency Water Conservation Portal](#).

Please visit [SaveOurWater.com](http://SaveOurWater.com) today!