

Drought Management Fact Sheet

- State laws (O.C.G.A. 12-5-7 and 12-5-8) and rules GA Comp. R. & Regs. Chapter 391-3-30) outline Georgia's response to drought conditions.
- The outdoor watering schedule statewide allows outdoor watering of established landscapes between 4:00 p.m. and 10:00 a.m. by anyone served by a public water system. Per the Water Stewardship Act of 2010, this schedule is in effect year-round for water conservation and pre-drought mitigation.
- EPD closely monitors several drought indicators, including rainfall, volume of water in selected streams, groundwater levels, reservoir levels, short-term precipitation forecasts and soil moisture. This information is used to guide the State's response to drought.
- Reports on these drought indicators and other information related to drought management and outdoor watering can be found on the EPD website at <https://epd.georgia.gov/watershed-protection-branch/drought-management>.
- The EPD Director is authorized to declare a drought response based on drought conditions and impacts on water supply. There are three levels of drought response available to the EPD Director. Drought response declarations apply to public water systems relying on surface water and/or groundwater.
- Should conditions merit, the EPD Director will convene a conference call with withdrawal permittees and public water systems located in the area under drought response consideration. If a drought response declaration is made, EPD will provide notice of drought status to all public water systems in the affected area. At a minimum, EPD will hold a quarterly conference call with affected public water systems after the drought declaration.

Drought Response Level Overview

This section provides an overview of Drought Response Levels. For more information, please see GA Comp. R. & Regs. Chapter 391-3-30 or contact EPD's Water Supply Program.

- **Drought Response Level 1** requires public water systems to conduct a public information campaign to explain drought conditions and the need to conserve water. The campaign shall include one or more of the following: newspaper advertisements, bill inserts, website homepage, social media and notices in public libraries. It should target all commercial and residential water use, not just outdoor watering. It should emphasize what customers should do to be good stewards of our water resources.

- **Drought Response Level 2** includes all of the requirements in Drought Response Level 1 and limits outdoor watering of landscape to two days a week determined by odd and even-numbered addresses as specified by the rule. The following outdoor water uses are prohibited: washing hard surfaces such as streets and sidewalks, water for ornamental purposes such as fountains, the use of fire hydrants except for firefighting and public safety, washing vehicles, non-commercial pressure washing and fundraising car washes. Public water systems must also select and implement four or more items from a Drought Response Strategies Menu (see below).
- **Drought Response Level 3** includes the requirements in Drought Response Levels 1 and 2 and prohibits all landscape watering for the purpose of maintaining ground cover, trees and shrubs. Watering of personal food gardens can only be done from 4:00 p.m. to 10:00 a.m. unless using drip irrigation or soaker hoses. Other allowable water uses include hand watering between 4:00 p.m. and 10:00 a.m., watering of athletic fields or public turf grass recreation areas, watering of golf courses with some limitations, use of reclaimed wastewater subject to the rules and water use during professional installation of irrigation systems. All ten items from the Drought Response Strategies Menu must be implemented. Certain business activities are exempt from the rule including commercial pressure washing, permanent car wash facilities, construction sites and the watering in of pesticides and herbicide on turf.

Under **Drought Response Level 3**, public water systems are required to implement a drought surcharge program unless they already have tiered conservation rates that meet the criteria specified in the rule. A drought surcharge program would serve as a temporary price incentive for customers to reduce water demand during a declared drought.

- The **Drought Response Strategies Menu** includes:
 - Public information campaign that goes significantly beyond the minimum notice and public service messages associated with Drought Response Level 1;
 - Glasses of water provided to restaurant customers only upon request;
 - Distribute retrofit kits and water saving devices to customers. These kits and devices may include, but not be limited to, shower heads, leak dye tabs, toilet tank displacement devices, and hose shut off nozzles;
 - Technical assistance outreach program to target high users to identify and/or recommend opportunities to reduce water usage;
 - Reduce system pressure, unless such reduction would create unsafe water supply conditions;
 - Pool cover requirements;
 - Implement a drought surcharge program, or tiered conservation rates, that satisfy the criteria of this rule;
 - Suspension of street cleaning program(s);
 - Implement, or accelerate, leak detection and repair program(s);

- Impose monetary penalties or terminate water services to customers to reduce outdoor water waste due to excessive application, outdoor leaks, improper irrigation, or other similar reasons.
- **Allowable activities.** The following thirteen outdoor water uses also are allowed daily at any time of the day by anyone during non-drought conditions and Drought Response Level 1 and Level 2. As described under Drought Response Level 3 some of these activities are subject to additional requirements under those conditions:
 - Commercial agricultural operations as defined in Code Section 1-3-3;
 - Capture and reuse of cooling system condensate or storm water in compliance with applicable local ordinances and state guidelines;
 - Reuse of gray water in compliance with Code Section 31-3-5.2 and applicable local board of health regulations adopted pursuant thereto;
 - Use of reclaimed waste water by a designated user from a system permitted by the Environmental Protection Division of the department to provide reclaimed waste water;
 - Irrigation of personal food gardens;
 - Irrigation of new and replanted plant, seed, or turf in landscapes, golf courses, or sports turf fields during installation and for a period of 30 days immediately following the date of installation;
 - Drip irrigation or irrigation using soaker hoses;
 - Hand-watering with a hose with automatic cutoff or handheld container;
 - Use of water withdrawn from private water wells or surface water by an owner or operator of property if such well or surface water is on said property;
 - Irrigation of horticultural crops held for sale, resale, or installation;
 - Irrigation of athletic fields, golf courses, or public turf grass recreational areas;
 - Installation, maintenance, or calibration of irrigation systems; or
 - Hydroseeding.
- **Imposition of additional restrictions.** Public water systems may not impose restrictions on outdoor watering that are different from the state requirements unless they obtain a variance from the EPD. Public water systems needing to impose outdoor water use restrictions more or less stringent than the state requirements may apply for a variance from the state's current drought response and EPD is required to act upon that request within 5 business days.