

Frequently Asked Questions: Water Conservation Ordinance and Water Efficiency



What is the updated City of Sacramento Water Conservation Ordinance?

To demonstrate how to Spare the Water outdoors, the Sacramento City Council recently updated the City's Water Conservation ordinance. It outlines how customers can save water outdoors through adjusting their irrigation schedule, preventing overspray and runoff, using an auto shut-off nozzle on the garden hose or using a broom instead of water to clean the driveway or sidewalk.

What is included in the Ordinance?

A complete copy of the ordinance is available at www.SpareSacWater.org. However, a major portion of the ordinance is the watering schedule:

Customers should water their yard before 10 a.m. or after 6 p.m.

During daylight savings time (roughly spring and summer), water your landscape just three days per week:

- ODD number addresses (1, 3, 5, 7, 9) may water on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday
- EVEN number addresses (0, 2, 4, 6, 8) may water on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday

When daylight savings time ends, water your landscape just one day a week:

- ODD number addresses (1, 3, 5, 7, 9) may water on Saturday
- EVEN number addresses (0, 2, 4, 6, 8) may water on Sunday

The ordinance also has stronger enforcement measures, including fines for repeat water waste offenders.

Are there any exceptions to the watering schedule outlined above?

The ordinance makes an exception for container plants and new landscaping, which may be watered every day for 21 days after installation to allow plants to root.

When can I wash my car?

You may wash your car before 10 a.m. or after 6 p.m. on your designated day as long as your watering hose has an automatic shut-off nozzle that stops water from flowing when the hose is not in use.

When can I water my vegetable garden?

You may water your vegetable garden before 10 a.m. or after 6 p.m. on your designated day. If you have specific questions about maintaining a healthy garden or landscape while complying with the ordinance, we invite you to request a Water Wise House Call by calling 311.

What are the penalties for repeat water waste citations?

- First violation: Written notification to property owner and tenant
- Second Violation: Written notification to owner and tenant and \$25 fine (can be waived with attending a Water Conservation Workshop)
- Third Violation: Written notification to owner and tenant and \$100 fine
- Fourth Violation: Written notification to owner and tenant and \$500 fine

As a property owner with rentals, why would I receive a violation notice when my tenants are the ones wasting water?

Just as with a water utility bill, the final responsibility for payment belongs with the property owner, which is why a violation notice is provided to both property owner and tenant.

What services and programs does the City offers to help customers use water wisely?

- Water Wise House Calls: A trained Water Conservation Specialist will visit a customer's home free of charge home to identify potential water savings inside and out by checking irrigation systems and giving customers water wise items such as low-flow showerheads, hose nozzles and informational materials. Not only is it free, but it takes only about an hour.
- Rebates: to replace older toilets and clothes washers with high-efficiency models.
- Periodic workshops to help customers both comply with the ordinance and maintain a beautiful landscape.

Where can people learn more about the free services and programs offered by the City?

Please visit www.SpareSacWater.org or call 311.

Why is it important to use water wisely?

California is facing severe water challenges, including the effects of a third dry year in a row. But, beyond the current water supply conditions, it's important to think about how to use water wisely every time we turn on the tap. Our water use impacts the environment around us, including the health of the Sacramento and American rivers. Using less water also benefits us personally because saving water saves energy, and can save money on utility bills. Ultimately, we all have a responsibility to be good stewards of our resources to ensure water is available today and in the future.

Where is most water used at home—inside or outside?

Surveys show that most people don't realize that a majority of water use—and water waste—occurs outdoors.

What are some easy steps people can take to reduce water outdoors?

There are many easy steps customers can take to use water wisely outdoors. For example:

- Follow the City's watering schedule, which is an important water efficiency tool, by watering your yard before 10 a.m. or after 6 p.m. on designated days.
- Use a broom instead of water to clean sidewalks, driveways, patios or other hard-surfaced areas.
- Use an automatic shutoff nozzle on hoses.
- Adjust sprinklers to prevent overspray and runoff.
- Repair leaks and broken sprinkler heads.
- Reduce each irrigation cycle by 1-3 minutes.

What are some tips for reducing water inside the home?

- Be sure to check plumbing and appliances for leaks and fix them within 48 hours.
- Turn off the water while brushing teeth or shaving.
- Shorten showers by two minutes.
- Also, if you're going to be purchasing any new appliances, like toilets or clothes washers, be sure they are water efficient. In fact, the City of Sacramento offers customers rebates for replacing older water-guzzling toilets and dishwashers with high-efficiency models.

What is a "Spare the Water Alert"?

The Department of Utilities will issue a "Spare the Water Alert" when temperatures are projected to reach 100 degrees for at least three consecutive days. On those days, demand for water can stretch the City's pumping abilities. Energy costs for treating and pumping water also are at their peak. During "Spare the Water Alert" days, the City will ask customers to voluntarily reduce their non-essential water use in order to conserve water, such as:

- Delaying landscape irrigation until late at night.
- Waiting to use the clothes washer or dishwasher.



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