

Drought Management Fact Sheet

- State laws and rules determine Georgia's response to drought conditions. The statutory framework for drought management is found in OCGA 12-5-7 and 12-5-8. The applicable rule is Chapter 391-3-30 Rules for Drought Management.
- The current non-drought 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 purposes of water conservation and pre-drought mitigation.
- EPD closely monitors several drought indicators. 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 <http://epd.georgia.gov/water-conservation>.
- Drought indicators that are closely monitored include rainfall, volume of water in selected streams, groundwater levels, reservoir levels, short-term precipitation forecasts and soil moisture.
- The state's drought response is centered on the ability of public water systems to supply adequate amounts of water. Therefore, the drought rule allows for targeting of the drought response declaration. Targeting of a declaration can be geographic within all or a portion of defined hydrologic units, counties or other areas and/or by water supply systems or sources.
- There are three levels of drought response available to the EPD Director. The response level is determined by the severity of the drought conditions and the ability of the public water system to meet demand for water and avoid a shortage of water in the impacted areas. Drought response declarations apply to EPD-permitted groundwater and surface water systems.
- The EPD decision-making process for drought response generally follows this sequence: monitoring of conditions, assessing severity and impact on water supply and public reporting of climatic conditions at least semi-annually.
- Should conditions merit, the EPD Director will convene a conference call with permitted public water systems under drought consideration. The Director may also consult with state and federal entities regarding drought conditions. If a drought response declaration is made, EPD will provide notice of drought status to all public water system permit holders in the affected area. At a minimum, EPD will hold a quarterly conference call with affected permit holders after the drought declaration.
- **Drought Response Level 1** requires permitted 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 can do and what they should do to be good stewards of our water resources.

- In addition to the requirements in Drought Response Level 1, **Drought Response Level 2** limits outdoor watering of landscape to two days a week determined by odd and even-numbered addresses. This includes maintaining ground cover, trees and shrubs. Even-numbered addresses may water on Wednesday and Saturday between 4:00 p.m. and 10:00 a.m. Odd-numbered addresses may water Thursday and Sunday between 4:00 p.m. and 10:00 a.m. 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. Examples include an intense public information campaign, restaurants restricted to serving water only upon request, street cleaning prohibited and pool cover requirements.
- In addition to the requirements in Drought Response Levels 1 and 2, **Drought Response Level 3** 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. Professional exemptions: 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. As specified in the rule, drought surcharge rate(s) shall be distinct from established water rates; shall apply only to the volumetric water rates; and shall be approximately revenue neutral relative to non-drought periods.
- 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:
 1. Commercial agricultural operations as defined in Code Section 1-3-3;
 2. Capture and reuse of cooling system condensate or storm water in compliance with applicable local ordinances and state guidelines;
 3. Reuse of gray water in compliance with Code Section 31-3-5.2 and applicable local board of health regulations adopted pursuant thereto;
 4. 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;
 5. Irrigation of personal food gardens;

6. 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;
 7. Drip irrigation or irrigation using soaker hoses;
 8. Hand-watering with a hose with automatic cutoff or handheld container;
 9. 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;
 10. Irrigation of horticultural crops held for sale, resale, or installation;
 11. Irrigation of athletic fields, golf courses, or public turf grass recreational areas;
 12. Installation, maintenance, or calibration of irrigation systems; or
 13. Hydroseeding.
- 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.