



DROUGHT EMERGENCY FAQs

Are we in a drought emergency now?

Despite recent winter storms, all of California is facing a third consecutive year of drought and nearly 60% of the state categorized in an extreme drought. 2022 is becoming the state's driest year on record with January, February and March being the driest in over 100 years. Water years 2020 and 2021 were the driest two-year sequence on record for precipitation in the state and were characterized by high temperatures and dry soils, which resulted in low runoff from the State's snowpack. As a result, in October 2021, Governor Newsom declared a drought state of emergency for all 58 counties in California, including Orange County. California is still under a drought emergency, which calls for a 15 percent voluntary reduction in statewide water use. In addition, the State Water Resources Control Board also enacted mandatory conservation regulations to prevent wasteful water uses and promote water conservation during the current drought emergency. Recently, due to the statewide water reductions not meeting expectations, the Governor is urging water suppliers to take a more aggressive response to the ongoing drought and implementing additional regulations. The drought is a serious reminder that we must continue to work together to ensure our water supplies remain reliable for future generations.

Where does El Toro Water District get its water?

ETWD imports 100% of its drinking water from MWD via the Diemer Water Treatment Plant (Diemer WTP) located in northeast Orange County. Under normal conditions, the Diemer WTP sources water from the Colorado River through the Colorado River Aqueduct and from Northern California through the State Water Project (SWP). Currently, both water sources are experiencing drought conditions. To preserve SWP water supplies, the Diemer facility has solely imported water from the Colorado River since March 2020. Imported water supply sources are subject to change as drought conditions evolve in both regions.

The District meets 17.5% of its total water demands with locally produced recycled water; this resource serves only dedicated irrigation accounts at customers such as homeowner associations, commercial shopping centers, schools, parks, golf courses and recreation centers.

What are El Toro Water District's plans in regards to the drought?

ETWD continues to plan and prepare for extended dry conditions. In response to the Statewide Drought Emergency, the District's Board of Directors (on March 24, 2022) updated the ETWD Water Shortage Contingency Plan and Ordinance for our service area. The plan sets actions the

District will take to assist customers in reducing water waste and increasing water use efficiency during a drought emergency. While we can't predict how long this drought will last or future mandates the state may impose, we are monitoring the drought conditions very carefully and will continue to ensure water reliability to our customers.

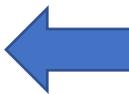
Here are a few examples of how ETWD has prepared and built resilience:

- ETWD uses recycled water for irrigation in portions of Laguna Woods and Laguna Hills, which meets 17.5% of the District's demands;
- We have made investments to ensure reliability of the water supply and developed regional partnerships for emergency interties with neighboring water agencies;
- Implemented water-budget based tiered rates;
- Provided education to residents, commercial customers, and HOAs on water use efficiency;
- Provided customers with rebates to remove over 730,000 square feet of turf, representing more than 225 million gallons of water savings; and,
- Provided customers with rebates for replacing inefficient water appliances.

What level of our Water Shortage Contingency Plan are we in?

In response to the Statewide Drought Emergency, the Governor's request to reduce water use by 15%, the State urging water suppliers to move to a level 2 water shortage, and our wholesale water suppliers moving to a Level 2 Water Shortage, the District's Board of Director's (on March 24, 2022) activated the Water Shortage Contingency Plan Level 2 Water Shortage for our service area. There are six levels. Level 2 reductions consist of reductions between 10 and 20%. **Currently, ETWD is asking our customer to do their part by using water efficiently and reduce their water use by 15%.**

ETWD Water Shortage Levels	
Level	Reduction %
1	0 – 10%
2	11 – 20%
3	21 – 30%
4	31 – 40%
5	41 – 50%
6	> 50%



Are there water restrictions now in the ETWD service area?

Governor Newsom has asked all Californians to reduce water use by 15 percent. The State Water Resources Control Board also enacted mandatory conservation regulations to prevent wasteful water uses and promote water conservation during the drought emergency. The following water wasting activities are currently prohibited by the SWRCB and/or the District's Water Shortage Contingency Plan Ordinance:

1. Water waste and unreasonable water use by any person at any time;
2. Watering landscapes within 48 hours of measurable rainfall (defined as ¼" in a 24-hour period);
3. No watering or irrigating in a manner that allows excessive runoff of potable water;
4. The use of potable water for irrigation of ornamental turf on public street medians;
5. Washing vehicles without an automatic shutoff nozzle;
6. No washing down hard or paved surfaces, except where needed for health and safety reasons;
7. All decorative fountains that utilize potable water must recirculate the water or be turned off;
8. The use of potable water for street cleaning or construction purposes, unless no other sources or method is available to protect the health and safety of the public; and,
9. Irrigating non-functional turf grass at commercial, industrial and institutional properties with potable water. (See specifics below)

ETWD Permanent Water Conservation Requirements are in effect 365 days a year and require customers to follow the following requirements:

- All prohibitions listed above in bullets 1 through 8;
- Watering or irrigating lawns, landscaping and other vegetation between 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. is prohibited; and,
- Fix leaks, breaks or malfunctions in lines, fixtures or facilities within 5 days.

The District also strongly recommends:

- Installing low-water demand plants, trees, and shrubs when renovating landscape; and,
- Installing swimming pool and spa covers to minimize water loss to evaporation.

For a full list of prohibited wastes, ETWD's Permanent Water conservation Requirements, and the District's Water Shortage Contingency Plan and Ordinance, visit etwd.com/conservation/water-conservation-shortage-stages/.

The Permanent Water Conservation Requirements flyer can be found at [etwd.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ETWD-PWCR-41322_Final.pdf](https://www.etwd.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ETWD-PWCR-41322_Final.pdf)

How does the prohibition of irrigating non-functional turf affect my yard, HOA or commercial building?

On May 24, 2022, the State Water Resources Control Board adopted an emergency conservation regulation prohibiting irrigation of non-functional turf grass at commercial, industrial, and institutional properties with potable water. This regulation is expected to be effective on June 16, 2022. El Toro Water District is working with the State and our wholesale water suppliers for specific details regarding the prohibition, implementation and enforcement mechanisms. ETWD will then educate its customers on the new regulation. The following points describe ETWD's interpretation of the regulation and are subject to change.

- The term Commercial under the regulation includes home owner associations and common interest developments.
- "Turf" means a ground cover surface of mowed grass.
- "Non-functional turf" is defined as turf that is solely ornamental or purely decorative.
- The regulation does not apply to residential turf in an HOA.
- The regulation does not apply to turf areas that are irrigated with recycled water.
- The regulation does not apply to residential properties that are not part of an HOA.
- The regulation does not apply to turf grass used for recreation or civic or community events. Any turf area that is used for any recreation (e.g. holiday party, walking dogs, get togethers, etc.) is not considered non-functional.
- The regulation does not apply to turf areas that require water to maintain the health of trees or other perennial non-turf plantings that are included in the turf area.
- The regulation allows water agencies to approve requests for watering non-functional turf if the property owners can certify that it is a type of low-water use turf that requires a fraction of the water consumed by standard types of grass. Low-water-use Turf would need to be certified as a low water use plant with a plant factor of 0.3 or less and demonstrate the actual use is less than 40% of reference evaporation.
- Sports fields and turf that is used for human recreational purposes or civic or community events are excluded.
- Any parts of a golf course that are being used for the game of golf are considered functional and excluded from the regulation.

Are we going to have days when we can/can't water plants/yard? What will my watering days be during the drought?

Currently, ETWD does not have any watering restrictions regarding irrigation schedules under the declared Level 2 Water Shortage. If the State requires water suppliers to limit watering to specific days during the week, then ETWD will be required to move into a Level 3 Water Shortage and impose watering restrictions. As a reminder, landscaping that is watered with recycled water would be exempt from these restrictions.

Can we hose-down (power wash) our hard-scape such as driveways, patios, etc.? Is this allowed during a drought period?

No. The District's Permanent Water Conservation Requirements are in effect at all times. This is only permitted to alleviate safety or sanitary hazards.

If needed for safety or sanitary reasons, use:

- a hand-held bucket or similar container
- a hand-held hose equipped with a functioning, positive self-closing shut-off device or
- a low-volume, high-pressure cleaning machine equipped to recycle any water used.

Can we hose-down (pressure wash) exteriors of residence homes, mobile home estates and/or buildings?

Per Governor Newsom's October 19, 2021 proclamation, the use of potable water for washing buildings and structures is prohibited except in cases where health and safety are at risk.

Can we wash our cars in our driveway? What are the restrictions? Do we have to go to a commercial car wash?

It is recommended that customers use a commercial carwash so the wash water will not run off their property and into the storm drain. Additionally, the dirty water used at carwashes is recycled and reused numerous times, making it a more efficient way to clean a dirty vehicle.

You may wash your car in your driveway provided you have a shutoff nozzle on your hose to ensure water is not running continuously.

How can I help?

We applaud the efforts of our residents and businesses that have continued to use water more efficiently year after year. Please help do your part and continue to look for ways to save water and eliminate water waste. Here are a few ways that you can help cut water use.

Much of our water is used outdoors. For the greatest impact, you can take actions to ensure your landscape is drought resilient.

- Do not water between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. Evaporation peaks during daylight hours, so watering when it's cool will help your soil and plants retain moisture.
- Reduce irrigating by 1 day a week.
- Replace high water need vegetation, like turf, with California native and drought-tolerant plants to reduce the overall water needs of your landscape.
- Take advantage of the Turf Removal Program to update your landscape. The rebate for the program has increased to \$4 per sq. foot.
- Apply for outdoor device rebates, such as the weather-based irrigation controllers, to upgrade your irrigation system and start managing water according to the weather.
- Fix outdoor leaks right away.
- Attend a landscape workshop to get started. Visit etwd.com/conservation/landscape-workshops/ to sign up.

Ways to save water indoors:

- Fix leaks right away. A small toilet leak can waste up to 19 gallons per day.
- Take advantage of water use efficient device rebates like premium high-efficient toilets and high efficiency clothes washers.
- Turn the tap off when brushing your teeth or shaving.
- Only run your clothes and dish washer when full.
- Scrape scraps off plates instead of rinsing them.

For more water wise tips, visit: etwd.com/conservation/waterwisetips/

For more information on rebates, visit: etwd.com/conservation/rebates/

How will my bill be impacted during the drought?

Currently, bills will remain the same. Customers who use water efficiently and stay within their water budget will continue to pay the District's lowest water rates. Residential and potable irrigation water consumption is priced in four tiers, based on your efficient use of water.

Is there an increased penalty for going over my budget during the drought?

Currently, there is no drought penalty for the inefficient or excessive tier rates. Any change to that threshold must be approved at a public meeting by a majority vote of the Board of Directors.

Where can I report water waste violations?

You can report water waste violations online at www.etwd.com. On the homepage, click on the yellow button to report water waste.

Have additional questions?

ETWD remains available to help our customers. If you have questions regarding the drought, please call our Customer Service Representatives at (949) 837-0660 or email the District at District@etwd.com.

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