

2015 Emergency Water Conservation Regulations & Mandatory Conservation Requirements – FAQ's

The City of Fairfield is required to meet a 20% conservation target on its total, City-wide water production from the months of June 2015 through February 2016, when compared to those same months in 2013. The City is not required to meet the target every month, but we will need to reach the target cumulatively by February 2016. Because the summer months are the biggest water use months, it is critical that the Fairfield community get off to a good start in June of 2015, so we encourage aggressive conservation right away. The City will be reporting its progress monthly here on the City's web-site.

How can I save water?

There are a number of ways to save water, including use indoors and outdoors. Outdoor irrigation is usually the area where residents can save the most amount of water simply by making sure water application matches the needs of the landscaping. A weather based irrigation controller is one of the simpler and least cost methods to control landscape irrigation. Changing out high water use turf and plants to drought tolerant plants and landscapes is another way to significantly reduce water usage, although this can be much more costly. The Solano County Water Agency offers a Cash 4 Grass rebate program that can help reduce the financial impacts of changing out your landscaping.

On the indoor side, there are numerous water efficient appliances and fixtures that are available to save water. Please see www.solanosaveswater.org or the City's website www.fairfield.ca.gov for more details on the types of devices and rebates that are available. Also, simply modifying behaviors like taking shorter showers and not allowing water to run when it is not being used can result in additional water savings. Finally, certain activities have been prohibited by the State of California and the City has some of its own prohibitions on water waste – please see the question directly below.

What activities are prohibited?

State Prohibitions:

- Landscape irrigation that runs off of your property
- Washing down sidewalks, driveways or other hardscapes (unless needed for health and safety reasons)
- Decorative fountains that do not recirculate the water
- Serving water at restaurants if not requested by the patron(s)
- Hotels and motels must provide the option to not have towels and linens laundered daily
- Irrigating landscaping during or 48 hours following a measureable rain event (greater than 0.25 inches)
- New landscaping will require high-efficiency irrigation systems as allowed by building code and future WELO requirements
- Use of potable water to irrigate street median ornamental turf (non-potable water is OK)

- Vehicle washing with running water (need to use bucket or automatic shut-off nozzle)

City Prohibitions:

- Landscape irrigation between noon and 6 pm
- Landscape irrigation on unauthorized days of the week
 - Effective June 1st, 2015, 3-day per week irrigation schedule City-wide. Odd numbers on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and even numbers on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

What will happen if a resident or business does not comply with these prohibitions?

The City always wants to use education as the first step in changing water use behavior. To that end we will implement a process that includes 1) notification, 2) warning and 3) citation/fine. If we observe or get reports of water waste, a water conservation representative will make contact with the resident or business owner in person and leave materials on water conservation. Should the City need to visit the same property a second time, a warning letter will be delivered. If the City is called out to the property for a 3rd time or more, a fine of \$100 will be issued, followed by progressively higher fines in subsequent visits (\$200 and \$500). Issuing fines is considered a last resort. The new State regulations require the City to track and report the number of warnings and citations issued and failure to do so by the City will result in the City being fined by the State, especially if the City is unable to reach its conservation target.

If I see water waste, what do I do?

To report incidents of water waste, please call the City's water conservation line at (707) 410-5469. City staff will respond as quickly as possible, but depending on the nature of the call our response may not be immediate. The City has a single water conservation program manager, a single water conservation intern dedicated to Fairfield, and is planning to hire a part-time "water cop." The City's landscaping field staff have been reduced due to budget cuts leaving only a single irrigation technician for all of the landscaping throughout the City (parks, roadsides, public buildings, etc.). Therefore, we rely on notification of problems from the public. If they are not reported, the City is probably unaware.

I have reported water waste. Why is nothing being done?

All reports will be screened and the most serious handled first. With 110,000 residents, 29,000 water accounts, and less than five full-time staff available to work on drought related issues, it may take considerable time to get to some of the less serious issues.

What is the City doing to regulate outdoor irrigation?

The City is going to utilize a mandatory maximum 3-day per week odd/even watering schedule – if your home address is odd numbered, you are permitted to water your outdoor landscaping on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. If your home address is even numbered, you are permitted to water your outdoor landscaping on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

What has the City done to save water?

In 2009, the Governor challenged all communities in California to reduce their overall water use 20% by 2020. Fairfield, which has a history of being a leader in water related issues, met that challenge head-on and by 2012, exceeded the 2020 mandate. Unfortunately, the State elected to use 2013 as the “base year” in their recent drought response plan. With little credit for much progress, the City nonetheless redoubled efforts in 2014 to further reduce water use. **The State’s target for Fairfield is to reduce consumption in 2015 by 20% compared to 2013.** In 2014, the communities overall efforts resulted in an 11% reduction. Some of the efforts made by the City to contribute towards reductions in potable water use are:

- Significantly reduced water applied to parks and other City maintained landscaping
- Utilized non-potable (non-drinking and untreated) water for many large landscape areas throughout the City including Paradise Valley Golf Course, Rancho Solano Golf Course, Rancho Solano Parkway landscaping, and almost all City-owned landscaping in Cordelia north of I-80.
- Installation of “smart” weather based irrigation controllers at Lee Bell Park and Laurel Creek Community Park
- Retrofitted most City buildings with water saving plumbing fixtures (where practical to do so)
- Shut down the recreational water activity play areas at City parks
- Converted the median irrigation along Courage Drive and Chadbourne Road from potable water to recycled wastewater (planned for May/June 2015)
- Continued to support a robust and effective water conservation program

Do I have to cut back my personal water use by 20%? What if I’ve already been conserving water?

The City of Fairfield is required to meet a 20% conservation target on its total, City-wide water production from the months of June 2015 through February 2016, when compared to those same months in 2013-14. The City is not required to meet the target every month, but we will need to reach the target cumulatively by February 2016. Because the summer months are the biggest water use months, it is critical that the Fairfield community get off to a good start in June of 2015, so we encourage aggressive conservation right away. If you’ve been conserving water and reduced your landscape irrigation, then great – keep it up. The City is asking everyone to do their share.

If I own a business that uses water in the products the company produces, am I required to cut production?

Not necessarily. Again, the City has to cut its overall water production by 20%. Therefore, what we ask businesses to do are to look for ways to use production water as efficiently as possible and to reduce non-process water as much as practical – replace turf or any high water use decorative landscaping with lower water use alternatives, etc. Just like for our residential customers, if your company is already using water efficiently, simply keep it up. If your company hasn’t been conserving, now is the time to start.

What is “measureable precipitation?”

This has not been defined by the State Water Resources Control Board, but Fairfield will be interpreting this to mean a significant rainfall event with widespread rain totals of 0.25 inches. Thundershower activity that occurs in a geographically varied area, produces only modest rainfall totals in areas where rain hits the ground and occurs during warmer months where the landscape’s irrigation requirement exceed the rainfall total will not be considered “measurable precipitation” for purposes of compliance and enforcement.

Does the City have a “Cash for Grass” program and if so, how do I apply?

The City participates, along with the other Cities in Solano County, in a Cash 4 Grass program. Call (707) 455-1113 to schedule a pre-inspection before you begin your work. The program will pay \$1.00 per square foot, up to \$1,000 for replacing turf with permeable (non-hardscape) water-saving landscaping.

Why is there always water on the road along Green Valley Road whenever the median area is irrigated?

This is an on-going challenge for the City. The design and maintenance standards for the Green Valley area are the result of a settlement between the City and the Green Valley Landowners Association in the late 1980’s. In that agreement, the City agreed to plant and maintain a lush landscape. Realizing the challenge to irrigate this landscape in the heavy soils and extremely windy environment, the City elected to use non-potable water to irrigate this entire area. Although we are required to honor our agreement and overspray is unavoidable, the City still does its best to minimize inefficiencies in these irrigated areas.

Why doesn’t the City drain the ponds at parks and City Hall?

There are ponds at several locations throughout the City including City Hall, Dover Park, Kaiser Industrial Park, and the Green Valley Lakes Subdivision. All of these ponds have sealed bottoms and serve as recreational features and/or water quality basins to clean storm water before it is released into Suisun Bay. To maintain the biological health of these ponds, most also have fountains that recirculate the water. While these ponds appear to be large users of water, they use much less than people typically think. Just like swimming pools, they do lose water to evaporation. However, the evaporation from these ponds is one-half to one-third as much as the irrigation needs of lawn (turf) for a given area. Because of their contributions to water quality and/or recreation and their comparatively low use of water, the City has elected to concentrate on controlling irrigation of turf as the primary means of meeting the State’s conservation goals for the community.

Why does the City flush hydrants in the middle of a drought?

Hydrant flushing is a necessary activity to maintain water quality in the City distribution system (pipelines and tanks). Periodic flushing of the system helps to keep pipelines clean. The City has significantly cut back its hydrant flushing program and is focusing only on areas where flushing is needed the most.

Why doesn't the City capture and re-use water used in hydrant flushing?

This isn't practical. In order to achieve the flows in the water mains necessary to achieve the desired results, water from hydrants must be allowed to flow unconstrained. Discharging this water into a tank or truck would reduce the flow rates to the point where the lines would not be cleaned.