

# Drought Awareness & Preparedness guide

Nearly every part of our country experiences periods of reduced rainfall. If we plan for drought, then we can enjoy the benefits of normal or rainy years and not get caught unprepared in dry years.

## Before a Drought

Strategies for drought preparedness focus mainly on water conservation. Make these practices a part of your daily life and help preserve this essential resource.

## Indoor Water Conservation Tips Prior to a Drought

### GENERAL

- Never pour water down the drain when there may be another use for it. For example, use it to water your indoor plants or garden.
- Repair dripping faucets by replacing washers. One drop per second wastes 2,700 gallons of water per year.
- Check all plumbing for leaks and have any leaks repaired by a plumber.

### BATHROOM

- Consider purchasing a low-volume toilet that uses less than half the water of older models. Note: In many areas, low-volume units are required by law.
- Install a toilet displacement device to cut down on the amount of water needed to flush. Place a one-gallon plastic jug of water into the tank to displace toilet flow (do not use a brick, it may dissolve and loose pieces may cause damage to the internal parts). Be sure installation does not interfere with the operating parts.
- Replace your showerhead with an ultra-low-flow version.

## Stock your home with bottled water.

Remember that each person in your home will require at least a gallon of water daily. To be properly prepared, have enough bottled water to last your entire household at least a week. This water should be used as a last resort in a drought. Use it only if drinking water gets cut off entirely.<sup>[6]</sup>

## During a Drought

Always observe state and local restrictions on water use during a drought. If restricted, for example, do not water your lawn, wash your car, or other non-essential uses, to help ensure there is enough water for essential uses. Contact your [state](#) or [local government](#) for current information and suggestions.

## Indoor Water Conservation Tips While in a Drought

### BATHROOM

- Avoid flushing the toilet unnecessarily. Dispose of tissues, insects, and other similar waste in the trash rather than the toilet.
- Avoid taking baths—take short showers—turn on water only to get wet and lather and then again to rinse off.
- Avoid letting the water run while brushing your teeth, washing your face or shaving.



- Place a bucket in the shower to catch excess water for watering plants.

## KITCHEN

- Operate automatic dishwashers only when they are fully loaded. Use the "light wash" feature, if available, to use less water.
- Hand wash dishes by filling two containers—one with soapy water and the other with rinse water containing a small amount of chlorine bleach.
- Clean vegetables in a pan filled with water rather than running water from the tap.
- Store drinking water in the refrigerator. Do not let the tap run while you are waiting for water to cool.
- Avoid wasting water waiting for it to get hot. Capture it for other uses such as plant watering or heat it on the stove or in a microwave.
- Avoid rinsing dishes before placing them in the dishwasher; just remove large particles of food. (Most dishwashers can clean soiled dishes very well, so dishes do not have to be rinsed before washing)

## Outdoor Water Conservation Tips While in a Drought

### CAR WASHING

- Use a commercial car wash that recycles water.
- If you wash your own car, use a shut-off nozzle that can be adjusted down to a fine spray on your hose.

### LAWN CARE

- Avoid over watering your lawn and water only when needed:
- A heavy rain eliminates the need for watering for up to two weeks. Most of the year, lawns only need one inch of water per week.
- Check the soil moisture levels with a soil probe, spade or large screwdriver. You don't need to water if the soil is still moist. If your grass springs back when you step on it, it doesn't need water yet.
- If your lawn does require watering, do so early in the morning or later in the evening, when temperatures are cooler.
- Check your sprinkler system frequently and adjust sprinklers so only your lawn is watered and not the house, sidewalk, or street.
- Water in several short sessions rather than one long one, in order for your lawn to better absorb moisture and avoid runoff.
- Use a broom or blower instead of a hose to clean leaves and other debris from your driveway or sidewalk.
- Avoid leaving sprinklers or hoses unattended. A garden hose can pour out 600 gallons or more in only a few hours.
- In extreme drought, allow lawns to die in favor of preserving trees and large shrubs.

