



## State Mandated and TCPUD Water Conservation Frequently Asked Questions

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### OUTDOOR WATER USE & SAVINGS

#### **Q. How much water use is normal outdoors?**

It is extremely difficult to determine how much outdoor water use is normal. It varies greatly depending on amount of turf, types of plants, type of irrigation system, soil type and weather. There are many resources on the internet to assist you with proper landscape maintenance. You may also contact any qualified landscape contractor in the area for further assistance.

#### **Q. What can I do to save water outdoors?**

##### Don't run the hose while washing your car

Clean your car using a pail of soapy water and a sponge. Use an automatic shutoff spray nozzle when rinsing for more efficient use of water. The District's Water Conservation Kit, which is free for all District customers, has an automatic shutoff spray nozzle in it. Stop by the District's main office to pick up your free kit!

##### Use a broom, not a hose, to clean driveways and sidewalks

Using a broom instead of a hose can save 8 to 18 gallons per minute of water.

##### Check for leaks in pipes, hoses, faucets and couplings

Leaks outside the house may not seem as bad since they're not as visible. But they can be just as wasteful as leaks indoors. Check frequently to keep them drip-free. Use hose washers at spigots and hose connections to eliminate leaks. View our [How to Check for a Water Leak](#) and our [Leak Repair Checklist](#) informational materials online.

For more tips, view the *Save Our Water* website, <http://saveourwater.com/>.

#### **Q. I like to water my yard to keep the threat of fire down, is that a good idea?**

Simply watering your yard is not the answer to protecting your home from a wildfire. To reduce the fire risk around your home, use basic defensible space techniques. For more information on Defensible Space, please contact your local fire protection district ([North Tahoe Fire Protection District](#) or [Meeks Bay Fire Protection District](#)) or visit the following website: <http://www.livingwithfire.info/tahoe/>

#### **Q. How can I reduce water consumption while having a landscaped yard?**

##### Water during the early parts of the day; avoid watering when it's windy

Early watering and late watering reduce water loss to evaporation. Try not to water when it's windy; wind can blow sprinklers off target and speed evaporation.

The District's [Water Conservation Ordinance 284](#) requires that watering can only occur between 8:00 PM and 9:00 AM. The irrigation day is defined as starting at 12:00 AM and ending at 11:59 PM, which means you may irrigate between 12:00 AM and 9:00 AM and between 8:00 PM and 11:59 PM on your designated day.

### Use efficient watering systems for shrubs, flower beds and lawns

You can greatly reduce the amount of water used for shrubs, beds and lawns with strategic placement of soaker hoses, rain barrel water catchment systems and simple drip-irrigation systems. A watering meter can be easily added to your hose to monitor water usage to required needs. Avoid over-watering plants and shrubs, as this can actually diminish plant health and cause yellowing of the leaves. For long-term water savings, consider adding moisture-retaining lissenite to your soil for lawn and shrub beds.

### Plant native, drought-resistant shrubs and plants

Many beautiful shrubs and plants thrive with far less watering than other species. Replace herbaceous perennial borders with native plants. Native plants will use less water and be more resistant to local plant diseases. Consider applying the principles of xeriscape for a low-maintenance, drought resistant yard. Plant slopes with plants that will retain water and help reduce runoff.

### Put a layer of mulch around trees and plants

Adding organic material to your soil will help increase its absorption and water retention. Areas which are already planted can be 'top dressed' with compost or organic matter. Mulch will slow evaporation of moisture while discouraging weed growth. Adding 2 - 4 inches of organic material such as compost or bark mulch will increase the ability of the soil to retain moisture.

### Don't water hard surfaces

Position your sprinklers so water lands on the lawn or garden, not on paved areas. Also, avoid watering on windy days.

### Water your lawn only when it needs it

A good way to see if your lawn needs watering is to step on the grass. If it springs back up when you move, it doesn't need water. If it stays flat, the lawn is ready for watering.

### **Q. How should I take care of my established lawn?**

The District strongly recommends native plants instead of lawns and turf. However, if you have an existing, established lawn and want to keep it, the following tips are recommended to save water and to make your lawn healthier:

- Aerate annually to relieve soil compaction and allow water and oxygen to penetrate into the root zone as well as allowing roots to penetrate deeper as well.
- Consider adding a light top-dressing of mulch after you aerate.
- Thoroughly rake or dethatch your lawn every spring to remove dead grass.
- Let the grass grow to a height of 3 inches to promote water retention in the soil, as well as to increase the turf density.
- Water between 2:00 AM and 5:00 AM during the summer months, for saturation of the root zone and less evaporation. The District's [Water Conservation Ordinance 284](#) prohibits watering between the hours of 9:00 AM and 8:00 PM.
- Don't over irrigate just to green up isolated dry spots. If the majority of your lawn is getting enough water, consider hand watering dry spots using a hose nozzle with an automatic shutoff versus increasing irrigation times for the whole lawn.
- Do not overwater your lawn. This leads to surface rooting, which causes the lawn to dry out more quickly. Try watering in 2-6 minute cycles to promote thicker and deeper roots for healthier plants. Water in 6 minute cycles, twice a week or in 4 minute cycles, three times a week to use less water and make your lawn healthier.

- Do not irrigate turf every day.
- Don't try to make your lawn weed-free, unless the "weeds" are an invasive species. Harvest weeds, if necessary.
- To reduce water loss from your sprinkler irrigation system, operate it manually, once per week to check for leaks in the system, correct sprinkler orientation, make sure all sprinklers pop up, and/or replace any emitters that have blown off.
- Replace the screw-top emitters on your sprinkler heads to use less water. These emitters cost very little (typically less than \$0.25), but can save a lot of water.
- Add a smart controller to your irrigation system, with irrigation efficiency controls, such as a rain sensor, a soil moisture sensor and a temperature sensing gauge. The District offers rebates for these irrigation efficiency controls. More information about the District's [Water Conservation Rebate Programs](#) can be found online.
  - o These controllers can be purchased through Truckee suppliers, such as Mountain Hardware, Western Nevada Supply, Ferguson, and Sierra Mountain Pipe and Supply. They can also be purchased at big box stores, such as Home Depot and Lowes. Check with your favorite local nursery or landscaper; they may also have these controllers available.

For more information:

<http://tahoercd.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Turf-Watering-Management.pdf>

<http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/pdf/8044.pdf>

**Q. How much water does a lawn need?**

A well maintained lawn typically requires an average of 1-inch of water per week. This is approximately 62 gallons per week per 100 square feet of lawn. The cooler spring and fall will require less than this and mid-summer may typically require a little more.

**Q. How often should I water my lawn or landscaping?**

Only irrigate three times per week. This will allow water to saturate deeper and promote deeper root depths. Deeper root depths provide better protection from heat stress, and disease, and greatly improve the appearance of a plants and lawn.

**Q. Won't watering at night create disease in cold-weather turf?**

No. Fungus or turf diseases will occur when conditions are ideal, regardless of when you water. Using the smallest amount of water needed for your turf will prevent overwatering and keep your turf healthier.

**Q. Who can help me create a landscaped yard with low water usage?**

Contact your local nurseries for more information on the types of landscapes and plants that use less water. There are many qualified local landscape contractors who can assist you with design and installation of water friendly landscape designs. You can also contact the [Tahoe Resource Conservation District](#) for a free site-specific visit and assistance in creating a landscape with low water usage.

## **INDOOR WATER USE & SAVINGS**

### **Q. How much water use is normal indoors?**

According to the American Water Works Association, before implementing basic water conservation techniques, the average indoor use is approximately 60 to 70 gallons per day per person. That translates into approximately 3,600 to 4,200 gallons per month for two people or 7,200 to 8,400 gallons per month for a family of four. Simple conservation measures can typically result in a 15-20 percent reduction in this number.

The District is asking our customers to aim for a goal of 50 gallons per day per person, as an important part of our water conservation efforts.

### **Q. What can I do to conserve water indoors?**

#### Check your toilets for leaks

Leaking toilets make up more than 75% of the total indoor water leaks in the average home. Put a little food coloring or dye tablets in your toilet tank. If, without flushing, the color begins to appear in the bowl within 15-30 minutes, you have a leak that should be repaired immediately. Most replacement parts are inexpensive and easy to install. The District Water Conservation Kit, which is free for all District customers, has dye tablets in it. Stop by the District's main office to pick up your free kit, or just a packet of dye tablets!

#### Replace your toilet with a high-efficiency model

For new installations, current plumbing and building codes require high efficiency toilets, which use 1.28 gallons per flush (gpf). Consider purchasing and installing a dual-flush toilet, which has two flush options; a half-flush for liquid waste and a full flush for solid waste. Replacing your existing toilet with a new, WaterSense toilet can reduce water usage from toilets by 20% to 60%. Visit: <http://www.map-testing.com/> for more information on low flow toilets.

The District offers a rebate for replacement toilets which use 1.28 gpf or less. More information about the District's [Water Conservation Rebate Programs](#) can be found online.

#### Put plastic bottles or float booster in your toilet tank

To cut down on water waste, put an inch or two of sand or pebbles inside each of two plastic bottles to weigh them down. Fill the bottles with water, screw the lids on, and put them in your toilet tank, safely away from the operating mechanisms, or buy an inexpensive tank bank or float booster. This may save 10 or more gallons of water per day. Be sure enough water remains in the tank so it will flush properly.

#### Install a hot water recirculation system and/or insulate your hot water pipes

Instead of running the hot water and waiting for it to get hot, install a hot water recirculation system. Hot water will always be available immediately. It saves water as well as the cost of heating the water. It's also easy and inexpensive to insulate your water pipes with pre-slit foam pipe insulation. You'll get hot water faster plus avoid wasting water while it heats up.

#### Install water-saving shower heads and low-flow faucet aerators

Inexpensive water-saving shower heads or restrictors are easy for the homeowner to install. A low-flow showerhead can save up to 2.5 gallons every time you shower. All household faucets should also be fit with aerators. This home water conservation method is also one of the cheapest! The District Water Conservation Kit, which is free for all District

customers, has a low-flow 1.5 gpm shower head, two 1.0 gpm faucet aerators, and Teflon tape in it to facilitate installation. Stop by the District's main office to pick up your free kit!

#### Take shorter showers

Long, hot showers can use 5 to 10 gallons every unneeded minute. Limit your showers to the time it takes to soap up, wash down and rinse off. One way to cut down on water use is to turn off the shower after soaping up, then turn it back on to rinse. With a low-flow shower head, a 5-minute shower saves anywhere from 12.5 to 25 gallons of water per shower. The District's Water Conservation Kit, which is free for all District customers, has a low-flow 1.5 gpm shower head as well as a 5-minute shower timer in it. Stop by the District's main office to pick up your free kit!

#### Take a shower instead of a bath

Take a 5-minute shower instead of a bath. A bathtub can use up to 70 gallons of water, plus all of the energy to heat that additional water.

#### Turn off the water after you wet your toothbrush

There is no need to keep the water running while brushing your teeth. Just wet your brush and fill a glass for mouth rinsing. Or turn the water on to rinse out your mouth and your toothbrush after your teeth are clean.

#### Rinse your razor in the sink

Fill the sink with a few inches of warm water, then turn off the faucet. This will rinse your razor just as well as running water, with far less waste of water.

#### Save water when washing hands

Turn the water off while you lather your hands.

#### Check faucets and pipes for leaks

A small drip from a worn faucet washer can waste up to 20 gallons of water or more per day. Larger leaks can waste hundreds of gallons. Repair your leaks! Your monthly bill from the District will indicate whether or not a leak may be present at your property. View our [How to Check for a Water Leak](#) and our [Leak Repair Checklist](#) informational materials online.

#### Use your dishwasher and clothes washer for only full loads

Automatic dishwashers and clothes washers should be fully loaded for optimum water conservation. Most makers of dishwashing soap recommend not pre-rinsing dishes, which is a big water savings. With clothes washers, avoid the permanent press cycle, which uses an added 5 gallons for the extra rinse. For partial loads, adjust water levels to match the size of the load. Replace old clothes washers with an Energy Star certified clothes washer. New Energy Star rated washers use approximately 40% less water and 25% less energy per load. New Energy Star certified rated dishwashers can save up to 10 gallons of water per cycle.

If you're in the market for a new clothes washer, consider buying a water-saving frontload clothes washer with a low water factor. The District offers rebates for replacement Energy Star Clothes Washers and Dishwashers. More information about the District's [Water Conservation Rebate Programs](#) can be found online.

### Don't use the toilet as an ashtray or wastebasket

Every time you flush a cigarette butt, facial tissue or other small bit of trash, gallons of water is wasted. View our [What Not to Put Down Your Toilet or Drains FAQs](#) online, for more information.

### Minimize use of kitchen sink garbage disposal units

Garbage disposals require lots of water to operate properly, and also add considerably to the volume of solids into a sewer system which can lead to maintenance problems. Start a compost pile or scrape plates into the garbage as alternate methods of disposing food waste. View our [What Not to Put Down Your Toilet or Drains FAQs](#) online, for more information.

### Dry-wipe pots, pans, and dishes

Use a paper towel or squeegee to remove excess food, grease and oil from your pots, pans and dishes, and dispose of it in the garbage, rather than down the drain. Many items can be put directly into the dishwasher after dry-wiping, avoiding wasteful pre-rinse. Do this before washing your dishes or putting them in the dishwasher to save water. View our [What Not to Put Down Your Toilet or Drains FAQs](#) online, for more information.

### When washing dishes by hand, don't leave the water running for rinsing

If you have a double-basin sink, fill one basin with soapy water and one basin with rinse water. If you have a single-basin sink, gather washed dishes in a dish rack and rinse them with a spray device or a panful of hot water. If using a dishwasher, there is usually no need to pre-rinse the dishes.

### Keep a bottle of drinking water in the fridge

Running tap water to cool it off for drinking water is wasteful. Bonus; by filling a water pitcher and letting it sit out, any chlorine in the water will off-gas and you will have better tasting water!

### Defrost food in the refrigerator

Rather than using running water to thaw food, defrost it in the refrigerator.

### Water houseplants with left-over water or ice cubes

Use any left-over water from your water bottle, or ice cubes to water plants with.

*For more tips, view the Save Our Water website, <http://saveourwater.com/> and <http://www.epa.gov/WaterSense/>.*

### **Q. How can I check my own water meter?**

View our [Water Meter FAQs](#) and our [How to Read Your Water Meter](#) informational materials online.

### **Q. Why are my water rates so high?**

For answers to this question and others regarding the District's rates, please view our [Water and Sewer Rates FAQs](#) online.

## DROUGHT REGULATIONS & DISTRICT RULES AND ENFORCEMENT

### Q. What if I already save water?

All District customers need to conserve water, as the State Water Resources Control Board is requiring the District as a whole to reduce its potable water production by 20% for each month as compared to the amount used in the same period in 2013.

Per [Resolution 15-12](#), adopted on May 15, 2015, the District shall require the following varying water consumption reduction amounts for its Residential Owners, based upon their historical monthly water usage in 2013. (If 2013 water consumption data is not available for a specific property, 2014 water consumption data shall be used.) As such, the District has categorized these Owners based upon their monthly historical water usage, and placed them into custom categories, with the highest category associated with the highest historical monthly water usage. Water consumption reduction amount requirements for each category have been assigned, as per the table below;

<b>Historical Summer Monthly Water Usage (June - Oct)</b>	<b>Summer Consumption Reduction Amounts</b>
100,001 gallons and up	37%
40,001 - 100,000 gallons	27%
20,001 - 40,000 gallons	22%
8,001 - 20,000 gallons	17%
0 - 8,000 gallons	12%

To see what your monthly required reduction amount requirements are, go to the District's [Water Conservation Calculator](#) online and input your customer number.

[Resolution 15-12](#) also requires that Condominium Owners and Commercial Owners achieve an overall monthly water consumption reduction of 22%, as compared to 2013 monthly water consumption.

### Q. What happens if I don't achieve the water target savings? Will I receive a penalty?

Per [Resolution 15-12](#), the District has established the following penalties for Owners that fail to reduce water consumption by the required conservation amounts as defined above, which will be reviewed and enforced as frequently as on a monthly basis;

<b>Failure to Reduce Water by Required Consumption Reduction Amount</b>	<b>Penalty Amount</b>
First Notice (Written Warning)	\$0.00
Second Notice	\$100.00 one time
Third Notice	\$250.00 one time
Fourth & Subsequent Notices	\$500.00 per day*

\*may include disconnection of water service

**Q. How will the District be enforcing the State mandated water conservation requirements?**

District staff will be reviewing water consumption usage on a monthly basis and notifying and working with customers that have not achieved the required water consumption reduction amounts. Per the above table, the first notification is a written warning with no costs associated. If a customer fails to respond to the first notice, the additional penalties will apply, up to and including \$500/day and disconnection of water service.

**Q. What should I do if I notice water being “mis-used” or I notice a violation of the District’s drought regulations?**

Please utilize the District’s online [Drought Response Violation Reporting Application](#) to log a report of water mis-use. The District has declared a Stage 2 Drought Response as per our [Water Conservation Ordinance 284](#) and [Resolution 15-12](#). All District water customers are subject to the requirements of this ordinance. The District takes reports of violations of this ordinance very seriously. In order to accept a report, a valid name and email address must be provided; however this information will be kept confidential.

The District will investigate such reports and will take action accordingly.

**Q. How will the District be fair to second homeowners because they may not come up one summer and then come up the next?**

District staff will work with individual customers that many have extenuating circumstances at their property; however, we are asking all customers to conserve water as much as possible. Please contact us if you have specific concerns.

**Q. What if I just bought my house last year and am using more water than was previously used there, specifically during the 2013 months that my water consumption will be compared to?**

District staff will work with individual customers that many have extenuating circumstances at their property; however, we are asking all customers to conserve water as much as possible. Please contact us if you have specific concerns.

**For more information:**

- Visit our website, at <http://www.tcpud.org/>
- View the District’s Water Ordinance at <http://www.tahoecitypud.com/download/general/cwo263.pdf>
- View the District’s Water Conservation Ordinance at <http://www.tcpud.org/download/general/ord284.pdf>
- For any other questions, call the **Conservation Hotline** at (530) 580-6282 or email [conservation@tcpud.org](mailto:conservation@tcpud.org) or call the **Compliance Services Division** at (530) 580-6281 or email Brandi Stirton at [bstirton@tcpud.org](mailto:bstirton@tcpud.org)
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