City of Santa Barbara
Stage Three Drought Regulations

Frequently Asked Questions

Are there restrictions on watering plants by hand?
Yes, hand watering must take place after 4:00pm or before 10:30am to reduce water lost to evaporation. In addition, all hoses must be equipped with a shut-off nozzle when in use. If you have a gardener, he or she must also follow these restrictions.

Are there restrictions on watering days?
No, at this time there are only restrictions on *times* of day: if you hand water, it must be between the hours of 4:00pm and 10:30am. If you use an automatic irrigation system, then it must run between 6:00pm and 8:00am. Watering cannot occur during or 48 hours after rainfall.

Can I wash my car?
Yes, hand washing of cars is permitted as long as the hose has a shut-off nozzle. We encourage residents to wash cars using a bucket and hose with a shut-off nozzle, or to take cars to a car wash that recycles their water.

Can sidewalks or buildings be hosed down?
No. Washing of pavement and other hard surfaces is prohibited, except to correct an immediate threat to health and safety, in preparation of painting or sealing, or for dust control, provided it is accomplished by use of a pressure washer, mop, bucket, or brush.

I have a fountain at my house, do I need to turn it off?
No, residential fountains are allowed. Commercial, industrial, or institutional fountains over 25 square feet must be shut off. If you are unsure of the size of your fountain, call the Water Conservation Hotline at (805) 564-5460 to arrange for measurement to comply with regulations.

My neighbor has water running down the street when they water, is there anything you can do?
Yes! There are three ways to report water waste: 1) call the Water Conservation Hotline at (805) 564-5460; 2) email WConservation@SantaBarbaraCA.gov; 3) visit SantaBarbaraCA.gov/ReportWater to fill out our online reporting form. Provide as much detail as possible, including the location, time of day, and if possible, include pictures. Pictures are very important as they are often the only proof we have to enforce regulations. Once we have the information, we will send staff out to inspect the situation and deliver a Notice of Violation.

Will I get fined for watering during the day?
If a resident is found to be in violation of any Stage Three Drought Regulation, he or she will first be issued a warning. Every subsequent violation will result in a $250 fine on their water bill, per violation.

Are there water cops patrolling my neighborhood?
No, our enforcement actions are complaint-driven and we rely on our community to help keep an eye out and report to us.

Can I install a new pool?
At this time, there is no restriction on permitting new pools. New pools will need to adhere to the regulations that require all pools to have covers and only allow draining and refilling up to one-third of the pool volume; building inspectors will look for this on new pools they inspect. Filling new pools is allowed, as this is necessary for structural purposes. In times of drought, we certainly do not encourage the installation of new pools. Please consider that more than 600 gallons of water are lost to evaporation in an average size uncovered pool per week.

What if safety concerns or physical constraints keep me from installing and maintaining a pool cover?
We understand that there are safety issues associated with some types of pool covers for public pools, and that some residents are physically challenged when it comes to taking a heavy cover on and off. Our goal is to reduce evaporation - *the average uncovered pool evaporates over 600 gallons of water per week.* Talk to your pool maintenance company or local pool supply store about alternative types of pool covers, there are several options out there to achieve compliance with 85% of the surface area covered. If you're still having trouble with compliance, call (805) 560-7586. If you are purchasing a pool cover for a multi-family or commercial pool, please review the County Environmental Health guidelines for pool covers.

What else can I do to help our community save water?
Conservation starts at home. Visit our conservation site to learn about water saving actions both indoors and out. Encourage friends, coworkers and classmates to conserve water. If you work for a hotel or restaurant, contact us at (805) 560-7586 for drought signage; and if you are a teacher, contact us to schedule an in-class presentation.