



## Drought Guidance for Consumers

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During periods of prolonged low precipitation, surface waters and aquifers used for public water supplies are slow to recharge; that is, replenish water being used by customers.

Operators of public water systems are experiencing such a condition at this time. To maintain uninterrupted water service, customers are called upon to assist their public water supply in conserving water so that remaining supplies can be extended until precipitation patterns improve and water supplies return to normal conditions.

### **What Can The Consumer Do?**

By reducing water usage, each consumer can allow the system to save water that can be used in future months, should the dry conditions continue.

### **How Can I Do This?**

Water conservation is simple. It is as easy as not letting water run while we wash or refraining from prolonged showers.

### **How Will I Know When To Do This?**

The customers of Connecticut's larger water companies receive conservation information annually, in billings. Public service announcements and informational bulletins are also occasionally provided. When water companies need consumers to practice voluntary or mandatory water conservation, they notify customers directly through mailing and may also use newspaper or radio messages to alert them.

### **What Causes Water Companies To Require Conservation?**

All large drinking water systems serving 1,000 or more people in Connecticut operate under a Water Supply Plan reviewed and approved by the Department of Public Health. One element of the Plan is the steps to be taken in water supply emergencies. The Plan indicates what conditions, such as amount of water remaining in reservoirs, require specific conservation activities.

### **What Is Voluntary and Mandatory Conservation?**

Requests to the public for voluntary conservation are usually associated with lower level concern for water supply availability. Here, the consumer is asked to try to reduce water usage. Requirements for consumers to save water under a mandatory notice indicate a more serious condition of the supply,

requiring an immediate reduction in water usage. Usually, such measures as curtailing outdoor water use and restricting the amounts of water available to commercial users are called for. Failure to comply with the directive to conserve is enforceable by municipal ordinance.

### **What Do Water Suppliers Do?**

Water suppliers implement Water Supply Plan management measures designed to decrease water usage, or increase the availability of water by adding new sources or activating unused sources. Some systems have water sharing agreements with other systems and these are activated, as necessary. All large water systems have emergency measures that can be activated, as necessary. This system of planning and cooperation has allowed Connecticut suppliers to maintain service over numerous dry periods during the past 20 years.

### **What Is The Role Of The Agencies?**

Local health departments work closely with their public during all health related events. Although local health officials are not directly responsible for regulating public water, they are an excellent source of information on public water supply status and private well water problems during these periods of water supply concern. Local health officials can also coordinate the services of all state agencies, as necessary and are in constant communication with the State Department of Public Health.

### **What Is The Role Of The Connecticut Department of Public Health?**

The Department of Public Health has authority over all matters related to drinking water adequacy and purity. This Agency oversees the health issues associated with drinking water. During time of low precipitation, which impacts public water supplies, the Department increases its activities in monitoring water supply adequacy statewide and provides direct contact, communication and technical assistance to water suppliers in addressing engineering and health issues. The Department also coordinates communications between water suppliers and the Commissioner and to local health officials and the general public and media. It also serves to coordinate the availability of necessary services to areas of specific concerns. It maintains a 24-hour emergency telephone number and communicates with all local health agencies through its Health Alert Network.

### **Who Should I Contact With Questions?**

Customers of public water suppliers should know their suppliers' telephone number and contact the supplier directly with questions or for conservation information. The public should also be aware that their local health department or district, as well as the State Department of Public Health, is available for information and advice.

### **Should I Be Concerned?**

Extending the availability of water during dry conditions is everyone's responsibility. Please be aware of conservation requests and follow recommendations or directives. There may be occasions where water interruptions, water restrictions or quality upsets may occur. In such cases, information will be provided as to duration and possible concerns. Generally, there should be no concern for the safety of the water being delivered.