



## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Drought and the Statewide Outdoor Water Use Schedule**

**June 12, 2009**

**1. If the drought is over, why do I have to follow an outdoor water use schedule?**

Georgians proved that water conservation during the drought saved a significant amount of water. Water conservation is important during times of drought as well as non-drought, and results in environmental and economic benefits. The schedules offer a reasonable opportunity to use water wisely by reducing the overuse of water in the landscape. To learn more about water conservation around the landscape and in the home and business, go to [www.conservewatergeorgia.net](http://www.conservewatergeorgia.net).

**2. The current statewide non-drought outdoor water use schedule is:**

- **Odd-numbered addresses** are allowed to use water outdoors on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays
- **Even-numbered and unnumbered addresses** are allowed to use water outdoors on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays
- **NO WATERING ON FRIDAY**
- The outdoor water use schedule applies to customers (households and businesses) who receive water from an entity (public and private) with a water withdrawal permit or a permit to operate a drinking water system.
- Water use may occur at any time of the day on the assigned days, however landscape watering is discouraged between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. because of its limited effectiveness.

*It is important that you contact your local water provider to find out if the local outdoor water use schedule is different than the state schedule.*

**3. The following outdoor water usages are allowed on any day and are not subject to the odd/even schedule.**

- (a) Capture and re-use of cooling system condensate or storm water in compliance with applicable local ordinances.
- (b) Re-use of gray water in compliance with applicable local ordinances.
- (c) Use of reclaimed wastewater by a designated user from a system permitted by EPD to provide reclaimed wastewater (Golf Courses).
- (d) Irrigation of personal food gardens.
- (e) Outdoor water fountains.
- (f) Water may be used to wash hard surfaces, such as streets, gutters, sidewalks, driveways, school buses, fire trucks, emergency vehicles and police cars **ONLY** when necessary for public health and safety.

- (g) Newly installed landscapes in place less than thirty days. After thirty days, must follow non-drought schedule.
- (h) Watering in pesticides and herbicides.
- (i) Irrigation of golf course fairways, tees and greens.
- (j) Landscape and irrigation contractors who hold a valid business license may use water during installation of irrigation equipment and as needed for proper maintenance and adjustments only.
- (k) Sod producers, food and fiber producers, ornamental growers, fruit and vegetable growers, nurseries and retail garden centers may water their stock.
- (l) Power-washing contractors who hold a valid business license may use water to run their power-washing equipment for customers.
- (m) Water may be used on construction sites.
- (n) Commercial Car Wash. Under SB466, water may be used for car wash facilities certified by the Division as a permanent facility car wash, and not be considered to be an outdoor water user for purposes of any outdoor watering restrictions.
- (o) Swimming pools.
- (p) Water may be used for other activities essential to daily business (*This exemption refers to activities that are part of a primary operation of a business. For example, a window washing business or a mobile car wash business is included in this category.*)

#### **4. Explain the exemption for new landscape.**

A “newly installed landscape” is any plant, seed or turf that has been in place less than 30 days. Replanting or reseeding an existing lawn is also considered a newly installed landscape. New landscaping may be installed by anyone (professional or homeowner/property owner). Irrigation of newly installed landscapes is allowed any day of the week, but only during allowed hours for the drought response level in effect, for a period of 30 days following installation. After thirty days, the non-drought schedule applies. For new landscapes installed by certified or licensed professionals, commercial exemptions apply.

#### **5. Are fundraising car washes allowed?**

Even though it is for a charitable cause, non-commercial car washes are only allowed during the designated days of the non-drought schedule for the site hosting the event. There is no exemption for fundraising activities.

#### **6. Can my water utility/local government impose outdoor water use schedules that are different than the state’s requirements?**

Local and regional water providers are authorized to implement different outdoor water use restrictions within their jurisdictions provided they obtain EPD approval.

#### **7. Who should I contact if I see outdoor water use that is not consistent with this rule?**

Any concerns should be addressed to the local water provider.

## **8. How will the state monitor monthly water use?**

Large water systems and local governments producing more than 100,000 gallons of water per day in the former level four drought response area must continue to file monthly water use reports.

## **9. What happens if the drought returns?**

The Director of the Environmental Protection Division is authorized to make drought declarations.

Scientists at EPD monitor many indicators of moisture in the state to help determine if a “drought response” is necessary. The data and information to help determine if drought response is needed comes from EPD monitoring stations, the state climatologist, the U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the National Weather Service and others. The indicators include:

- ◆ groundwater levels,
- ◆ streamflows,
- ◆ reservoir levels,
- ◆ rainfall in the past 3, 6, and 9 months,
- ◆ expected rainfall in the next 90 days, and
- ◆ water use patterns across the state.

Based on the information provided from these sources, the EPD Director, with help from a diverse group of advisors, makes a decision to (or not to) declare advanced levels of drought response. Increased levels (1-4) indicate increased levels of drought response (see the State Drought Management Plan for details <http://www.gaepd.org/Documents/outdoorwater.html>).

## **10. Can I wash my car?**

Yes, but only during the days you are allowed to use water outdoors. Keep in mind that the schedule applies to ALL types of outdoor water uses, not just lawn watering.

## 11. What can I do and where can I go to find out more information about ways to save water around my home?

Keep in mind that plants need no more than one inch of water every 7 to 10 days. So practice these five *waterSmart* tips to save water, time and money:

1. *Water only once a week.* When it hasn't rained, a deep soaking every week will provide your plants with plenty of moisture.
2. *Soak, don't sprinkle.* When you water, aim the nozzle at the base of plants so more water will reach the roots.
3. *Don't water in the heat of the day.* You will only lose water to evaporation. If you have an automatic system, set it to come on in the early morning hours between 4am and 10am.
4. *Turn off your sprinkler when it is raining.* You can do this manually or if you have an automatic system, install an inexpensive rain sensor shut-off switch.
5. *Mulch!* Using pine straw, bark chips, or ground hardwood mulch on the roots of plants and trees helps the soil retain water.

More *waterSmart* tips are available to help you maintain your landscape and save water this year and in years to come. Visit [www.ConserveWaterGeorgia.net](http://www.ConserveWaterGeorgia.net) for tips and facts to help you and your neighborhood!