

# Water Awareness

By Darrel Lockard

With summer coming into full swing, the water shortage is an issue on everyone's mind. There are many ways to conserve water that needs to be communicated to customers. The research not only reminded me of water awareness but how water rates, public education, board education, responsibility and a host of other topics that we need to stay abreast of. I hope this rings some bells and answers some questions or even makes you have more questions.

## GOAL IS TO CONSERVE WATER AND SUCCEED!

Do you have a Drought Contingency Plan? If so, do your customers know why the plan even exists? Public education is a must in every system; it does not matter where you start as long as there is an effort to communicate with the customers.

The goal under a Drought Contingency Plan is to educate water customers on how to use water wisely in order to conserve enough water to avoid or delay more severe restrictions. Public education can even make the customer aware how to keep from costly upgrades for high periods of demands.

## EASY WAYS TO SAVE WATER

Have you ever had a newsletter that was sent out to your customers? If so how was the response, is there a better way to convey your thoughts and ideas to them?

It is easy to save water and reduce your water bill by following some of these helpful tips:

- ~ Turn sprinkler or irrigation systems to the manual setting.
- ~ Never clean your walks or driveways with a hose.
- ~ Do not water lawns too frequently (most grasses only need an inch of water a week.)
- ~ Do not water when it is raining.
- ~ Do not water during the heat of the day to avoid excessive evaporation.
- ~ Raise your lawnmower blade and cut the grass to a height of 3 inches to shade the soil, reduce evaporation and to allow roots to grow deeper.
- ~ Choose "water-wise" plants.

- ~ Prepare outdoor planting beds with plenty of mulch to retain soil moisture.
- ~ Never run your dishwasher without a full load.
- ~ Adjust your washing machine water level for the size of load.
- ~ Replace your old washing machine with a water efficient washing machine.
- ~ When brushing your teeth, turn off the water until you need to rinse.
- ~ Steam your vegetables instead of boiling them in a pot of water.
- ~ Install a low-flow shower head.
- ~ Take a short shower instead of a bath.
- ~ Check all water line connections and faucets for leaks.
- ~ Add faucet aerators.
- ~ Replace your old toilet with a water efficient toilet.
- ~ Check your toilet(s) for leaks by adding a few drops of food coloring to the tank; if the color appears in the bowl, the toilet needs adjustment or repair.

"Water IQ: Know Your Water" is there a public education and awareness campaign initiated by your system that encourages residents to learn more about their water resources and how to save them? You may have seen or heard the advertisements in local newspapers, on the radio and on television. What is your water IQ? Do your customers know where their water comes from? Does your board know? Have you invited them to view the facilities? If you haven't, do it soon.

## ENFORCEMENT AND RATE

There are several ways to get the customer's attention. Education and awareness are probably the most useful tools; however there are ways to enforce compliance when other avenues have not convinced some customers. With a city ordinance a warning or citation can be issued for water use violations. Please note that a warning carries no penalties, however warnings may be followed by citations if further violations occur.

### *Rate Surcharges (other options):*

With a city resolution, residential accounts could incur a 25% rate surcharge for water usage over 10,000 gallons per month or other reasonable volumes. Irrigation accounts could incur a 25% rate surcharge for water usage over 1,500 gallons per

month or other reasonable volume. Remember to check with local experts for water requirements for irrigation.

Mandatory water use restrictions should go into effect on June 1 of each year and the new rate surcharges will reflect on the utility bills sent out in July and continue as long as the Drought Contingency Plan is in effect.

#### NOTE THESE MANDATORY WATER RESTRICTIONS

Residential and commercial water customers will need to follow the restrictions in the City's Drought Contingency Plan.

##### *The water use restrictions include:*

- ~ Limit landscape irrigation (use of sprinklers) to once every seven days on the same day as regular residential trash pick up. Commercial customers will need to water according to the residential trash pick-up schedule as well.
- ~ Do not water with sprinklers between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.
- ~ Do not drain or fill existing pools except to replace normal water loss.
- ~ No hosing of paved areas, buildings, or windows.
- ~ No wasteful water runoff.
- ~ No vehicle washing or rinsing by hose.
- ~ Golf courses may only water greens and tee boxes if using treated water.
- ~ No operation of ornamental fountains fed by treated water.

##### *Water Use Exceptions:*

- ~ Commercial car washes will continue to operate since their wastewater drains into the sanitary sewer system that replenishes the water supply.
- ~ New pools may be filled with water when construction is complete.
- ~ Golf courses not watered by treated water are not restricted to tee boxes and greens only.
- ~ Foundations and new plantings (1<sup>st</sup> year) of trees and shrubs may be watered for up to 1 hour on any day by a hand-held hose, soaker hose, or drip irrigation system.
- ~ Established trees may be watered by hand-held hose, soaker hose, or drip irrigation system within 10 feet of their trunk as part of the one hour watering schedule.

As I said earlier in this article I hope to give some ideas on how to answer questions on the summer water shortages. Not all of the choices are popular with the customers but can be tools or options to deal with water usage during this time of year.