

STAGE 1 WATER SHORTAGE WARNING

Frequently Asked Questions



Why are you recommending a Stage 1 Water Shortage Warning?

One-hundred percent of Santa Cruz drinking water is from local rainfall, primarily from local rivers and creeks. This is the second dry year in a row, currently ranking as critically dry. We have only one reservoir, which only holds about a year's worth of water. While we may have enough supply for this year, we must always plan ahead to ensure we have enough supply if we have multiple dry years in a row.

What does a Stage 1 Water Shortage Warning look like for customers?

Each customer will receive a monthly allotment of water, which will be reflected on their water bill. Currently, average monthly water use for a single family residential account is 6 ccf; the Stage 1 Warning allotment for most single family households of three will be 5ccf. (Ccf is a unit of water, which equals 748 gallons.)

If the residential allotment is based on a family of three, but I have five family members, can I request more water?

Yes. You can apply for additional water through your account in Water Smart <https://santacruz.watersmart.com> , or you can call customer service at (831) 420-5220.

Will people be penalized if they go over their allotted amount of water this year?

Not in a Stage 1 Warning. The idea is for people to become aware of their use and cut back appropriately now, so if we need to move to a Stage 2 Water Shortage next year – when penalties will be applied – customers will have already learned to live within their allotment.

What happens if I go over my monthly allotment of water?

If you go over your monthly allotment, you'll be notified on your bill. (Our version of a "nasty gram.") It's important that customers pay attention to their use, as this summer is a "practice run" for if we move to Stage 2 - at which time a "nasty gram" becomes an excessive use penalty.

What can customers use water for, and what can't water be used for?

Water waste is always prohibited, for example using water to hose down a driveway or sidewalk without having the hose controlled by a shut off valve. However as long as customers stay within their allotment they may use their water as they wish.

My property is wrongly categorized in the billing system as a multi-family dwelling, when it's a single-family dwelling (and vice-versa). What should I do?

Please call Customer Service directly at 831 420-5220 to have your classification changed.

My single family residence includes dogs/horses/lamas. Can I get more water for my animals?

The City's municipal code allows water allotments to be increased for two reasons: for large households with more than 3 persons; for a resident with a health condition that requires above normal indoor water use. During shortages, water is prioritized for indoor human uses.

My domestic water meter serves common area landscaping. Can I receive a higher water allocation?

No. The City Municipal Code does not allow for additional water for common area landscaping. During shortages, water is prioritized for indoor human uses. Please inquire with Water Service Engineering at 831-420-5210 about the possibility of installing a dedicated irrigation water meter for the property.

Is the Water Department going to charge a drought-cost recovery fee again?

We are not proposing to implement the drought-cost recovery fee at this time.

Will the Water Department patrol neighborhoods for water waste?

Water Department staff will not be actively patrolling neighborhoods during a Stage 1 Warning, however community members can call us with concerns about water waste and they will be investigated and acted upon as appropriate.

Where can I/who should I call if I see water being wasted? Customers should call the leak line at (831) 420-LEAK (5325) and leave a message or send an email to conservation@cityofsantacruz.com.

Are golf courses going to close?

During a Stage 1 Warning DeLaVeaga public golf course will remain open, as will Pasatiempo. Pasatiempo is a private golf course and is irrigated with recycled water from Scotts Valley.

How much do commercial/business accounts need to cut-back this year?

Commercial use fell dramatically in 2020 due to the pandemic, and is barely recovering. Therefore there's no need for additional reductions in commercial use in order to meet our 10% system reduction goal.

Why are development projects still being approved when we have a water shortage?

Santa Cruz has had water supply problems for decades. With modern water efficiencies, modest development won't make our problem worse, just as preventing any new development won't make the problem go away. Santa Cruz has a water supply problem made worse by climate change; it's a problem that must be solved – regardless of development.

If we're still using water at the low rate we were during rationing in 2014/15, why do we need to cutback our use at all? Many customers who have maintained low use following rationing in 2014 and 2015 may not need to take additional actions, as their use may already be under the Stage 1 allocation of 5 ccf.

What's the best way for customers to stay informed about local water restrictions and their water use?

The best way is to sign-up for Water Smart. Water Smart is our customer web portal that allows customers to view detailed information about their water use. Customers can use WaterSmart to get information on how much they are using, get conservation tips, apply for a higher allocation, and get notifications of unusual use or use over a predetermined threshold. Sign up for Water Smart at <https://santacruz.watersmart.com>. Account numbers and zip codes are needed to register.