

City of Houston Stage One Drought Contingency Plan FAQs

Top tips to reduce your water usage

The following tips can Houston residents conserve water. Please share this information with your family, friends, and neighbors. **Your continuous support helps us be a stronger, more resilient city every day.**

- Grass needs less water than you think to stay healthy. Use the free [WaterMyYard.org](https://www.watermyyard.org) app to find out how much water your lawn needs. The app provides watering recommendations based on the weather, your location, and your irrigation system.
- Avoid washing sidewalks, patio furniture, or cars. If you must wash your car, use a car wash. Most car washes use recycled water.
- Check for and repair leaks, dripping faucets, and running toilets.
- Run dishwashers and clothes washers only when full.
- Take shorter showers.
- Install a rain barrel and use it for outdoor watering.

FAQs

1. Why did the City of Houston implement Stage One voluntary water conservation efforts?

Stage One of the City of Houston Drought Contingency Plan is triggered when there is an observed drop in annual rainfall amounts and higher-than-normal daily temperatures. During the past month, the City of Houston has had record-setting high temperatures above 90 degrees and a significant decrease in rainfall. As a result, most of Houston's service area is experiencing moderate to severe drought conditions. These conditions call for the implementation of Stage One water conservation measures.

2. How do Stage One Voluntary watering restrictions affect residents?

Stage One drought response calls for the following voluntary water conservation efforts:

- Limit outdoor watering to twice a week between the hours of 7PM and 5AM with the following schedule:
 - **Sundays and Thursdays** for **single-family residential** customers with **even-numbered** street addresses
 - **Saturdays and Wednesdays** for **single-family residential** customers with **odd-numbered** street addresses
 - **Tuesdays and Fridays** for **all other customers**
- Check & repair water leaks, including dripping faucets & running toilets

- Check sprinkler heads to make sure water is not spraying into the street or directly into a storm drain and/or gutters

3. Can I be fined if I water on the wrong day and time?

Stage One watering restrictions are voluntary. Residents will not be fined or receive violations for not properly following the watering schedule. However, if the City of Houston implements Stage Two of the Drought Contingency Plan watering restrictions become mandatory and can result in a fine.

4. Are there any watering methods that are allowed at any time or on any day?

Yes, you can use a handheld garden hose to water your flower beds and/or trees that may require additional watering outside the City's irrigation schedule.

5. How do watering restrictions apply to gated homeowner's associations (HOAs) which are all on a master meter?

Follow the schedule according to the individual address of each home. The master water bill address should be used to determine the schedule for watering of all common areas of the community.

6. What if my homeowner's association (HOA) has watering requirements or is not following the recommended watering restrictions?

Notify your HOA about the City's watering restrictions and share the [current press release](#). If the issue continues, please contact the Water Program's team at WaterConservation@houstontx.gov. They will reach out to your HOA to provide guidance.

7. Do water restrictions apply in Houston's Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction?

Water restrictions apply to all retail customers who receive a water bill from the City of Houston and all wholesale treated water customers.

8. How do I track my current water usage?

Sign up for the City's Water Consumption Awareness Program at www.houstonwater.org so you can track and understand your water usage. Through this program, customers can access their water usage information and set leakage alerts.

9. How much should I water my lawn? Am I overwatering?

Grass needs less water than you think to stay healthy. During Stage One, it is recommended to not water more than 1 hour per day for hose-ended sprinklers and 40 minutes for automatic irrigation systems (following the watering schedule).

For free, tailored recommendations, use the [WaterMyYard.org](https://www.watermyyard.org) app. This tool provides watering recommendations based on the weather, your location, and your irrigation system.

10. How do I know if I have any leaks inside my house?

Check for dripping faucets and running toilets. Inspect toilets for silent leaks by putting food coloring in the toilet tank. If colored water leaks into the toilet bowl before flushing, this indicates you have a leak that needs to be repaired.

11. How do I know if I have any leaks outside my house?

Look for water visibly leaving your property or flowing into the street or gutters. When in doubt call an irrigation expert.

12. Where can I find a copy of the City's Drought Contingency Plan?

The City of Houston Drought Contingency Plan can be found on the water conservation webpage at www.publicworks.houstontx.gov/waterconservation.

13. What would trigger the City of Houston to implement Stage Two of the Drought Contingency Plan?

The City of Houston will implement Stage Two of the Drought Contingency Plan if the mayor finds one or more of the following conditions exist that may impact all or a portion of the city's water supply system:

- Combined total storage of surface water supply is less than 24 months, based on a calculated projection of monthly production of city water that includes historic production and information provided by customers.
- Combined total storage of surface water supply is less than 16 months, based on a calculated projection of current water production for the most recent 24-hour period.
- Current water production is 80 percent of the available treatment capacity.
- Loss of approximately 20 percent of available treatment capacity.
- Water pressure readings of 45 pounds per square inch or less throughout all or material portions of the city's treated water distribution system.

14. How else can I help conserve water?

- Turn off the water when you are not using it (e.g., while brushing teeth, scrubbing hands, or shaving).

- Install water-efficient appliances and fixtures. Using WaterSense labeled products uses less water and can save money. If you are interested in a FREE water-efficient (1.25gpm) showerhead, contact WaterConservation@houstontx.gov. Available while supplies last.
- Use mulch in your landscaping. Mulch saves water by reducing soil evaporation.
- Use native or adapted-to-the-climate plants. These plants are adjusted to Houston's climate and rainfall & do not need extra water.

For additional water-saving tips please visit Houston Public Work's Water Conservation webpage at www.publicworks.houstontx.gov/waterconservation

If you have additional questions not addressed in this FAQ please contact the Water Programs team at WaterConservation@houstontx.gov