



## STAGE TWO DROUGHT CONTINGENCY PLAN FAQ

### City of Houston Stage Two Drought Contingency Plan FAQs

#### **When did the City of Houston enter Stage Two of the Drought Contingency Plan?**

The City of Houston entered Stage Two of the City's Drought Contingency Plan, effective August 27, 2023.

#### **Why did the City of Houston implement Stage Two of the Drought Contingency Plan?**

Stage Two was triggered due to intense heat combined with a significant drop in annual rainfall. This resulted in greater water use and dried up the soil, increasing in water leaks, which can impact water pressures.

The Stage Two designation of the Drought Contingency Plan applies to the entire City, including systems supplied by groundwater only. Mandatory water restrictions do not apply to entities that obtain water from non-municipal sources.

#### **How do Stage Two mandatory water use restrictions affect water customers?**

Stage Two drought response imposes the following mandatory restrictions limiting outdoor water use to twice a week between the hours of 7PM and 5AM the following day with the below 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**
- Any outdoor water use that drains onto adjacent properties or public or private roadways or streets or gutters is prohibited.
- Customers may use a handheld hose or watering container during any day at any time if the customer is present monitoring the water use, and it does not result in any water flowing off of the property.

#### **Can I be fined for violating Stage Two water use restrictions?**

Yes. Any water customer who violates these watering times will be issued up to three written warnings. Any subsequent violations are subject to a fine of up to \$2,000 for each occurrence of the offense (Section 54.001 of the Texas Local Government Code).

#### **How can I report a possible violation?**

Please call 311 to file a Stage Two water use restriction violation.

#### **Can I apply for a variance from the water use restrictions?**

Yes. Houston Public Works is providing the opportunity for Houston Water customers to apply for a variance from the water use restrictions. The [Water Use Restrictions Variance Application](#) can be found at [www.houstonpublicworks.org/current-watering-restrictions](http://www.houstonpublicworks.org/current-watering-restrictions)

Completion of the application does not guarantee that the variance will be granted. All variances are valid for the declared drought stage in existence at the time of issuance. A new application will be

required if the City of Houston changes the drought stage. Please send the completed application and all attachments to [HPWConserve@houstontx.gov](mailto:HPWConserve@houstontx.gov)

### **How is the City addressing water leaks in the distribution system?**

Houston Public Works is monitoring the system closely and has added contractors to assist with the mitigation of leaks as quickly as possible. We are asking the community to help conserve water where they can, in addition to the Stage Two watering restrictions.

[Please call 311](#) and report water leaks so our crews can address them as soon as possible. If a reported leak has worsened, please call 311 again to notify Houston Water that the leak has become more serious.

### **Why are the leaks not being repaired right away?**

The City of Houston is a large urban area with over 7,600 miles of water lines and other assets. City staff and contractor support teams are working diligently to repair leaks as quickly as possible.

The investigation and prioritization process requires several steps so that crews can safely dig into the right-of-way and initiate repairs. We ask customers to please be patient and call 311 if they believe a leak has worsened.

### **Why do I have lower water pressure?**

The City is currently experiencing a significant demand for water. The intense heat and lack of rainfall combined with the rise in water use and leaks have all contributed to a drop in water pressure. Water restrictions have been implemented to ensure the water pressure meets regulatory requirements.

Pressures for which the City is responsible are measured from the public water supply, typically from a nearby fire hydrant. A customer may notice that the pressure at their tap or inside their facility is reduced from typical conditions. However, the pressure on the public side of the water line are still operating above regulatory levels.

### **Why are Houston Public Works staff still flushing lines and releasing water when we are in a Stage Two drought?**

Houston Water has certain regulatory obligations as a utility. Flushing lines by opening fire hydrants is part of fulfilling those regulatory obligations.

### **Is watering with a handheld hose or watering container allowed?**

Customers may use a handheld hose or watering container during any day and at any time so long as the customer is present monitoring the water use and ensuring that no water flows off the property.

### **Is drip irrigation allowed?**

Customers may utilize drip irrigation systems any day and time so long as it does not result in water flowing off the property.

### **Is there a time limit to how long I can water?**

There is currently no set time limit, as long as you are watering on your specified day and time, and the watering does not result in water flowing off your property onto the street.

Most yards in the Houston area only need 5-20 minutes of irrigation or less. Watering too long can result run-off, which is prohibited during Stage Two.

### **How can I prevent runoff when watering?**

If you are experiencing water running off your property when watering, use shorter watering times. Set your irrigation system to run for shorter periods with breaks in between to allow the soil to absorb the water. This helps prevent runoff and ensures water reaches the roots.

If your sprinkler system is spraying the sidewalk/street or causing water pooling, you likely need to adjust or replace your sprinkler heads. If necessary, contact a licensed irrigation professional.

### **Can I fill my pool during the drought restrictions?**

Only fill your pool during the specified days and times outlined in the current watering restrictions.

The City of Houston is asking the community to use as little water as necessary to help remove stress on the system due to increased demand.

We ask customers to refrain from filling pools while Houston is in a drought. Covering your pool when not in use is highly recommended to avoid water loss through evaporation.

### **Can I fill my fountain?**

Only fill your fountain during the specified days and times outlined in the current watering restrictions.

The City of Houston is asking the community to use as little water as necessary to help remove stress on the system due to increased demand.

We ask customers to refrain from filling water fountains while Houston is in a drought.

### **Do the water use restrictions apply if I have a separate irrigation meter?**

Yes. Stage Two Water Use restrictions apply to all direct Houston Water customers, even those with separate irrigation meters.

### **Is residential pressure washing allowed?**

No. Any outdoor water use that drains onto adjacent properties and/or roadways and streets is prohibited.

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

Houston Public Works sent communications to HOAs across the City with the mandatory water restriction schedule. Residents should follow the schedule according to the individual address of each home.

For the watering of all common areas in an HOA community, the Tuesday and Friday schedule for watering should be followed.

### **What if my homeowner's association (HOA) is not following the recommended watering restrictions?**

Please call 311 to file a Stage Two water use restriction violation.

### **Do water restrictions apply in Houston's Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction?**

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

### **Where can I find a copy of the City's Drought Contingency Plan?**

You can find The City of Houston's Drought Contingency Plan can be found on the water conservation webpage at [houstonpublicworks.org/waterconservation](https://houstonpublicworks.org/waterconservation).

### **How else can I help conserve water?**

- Check and repair water leaks, including dripping faucets and running toilets.
- Check sprinkler heads to ensure water is not spraying into the street or directly into a storm drain and/or gutters.
- Avoid washing sidewalks, patio furniture or cars. If you must wash your car, use a car wash. Most car washes use recycled water.
- Run dishwashers and clothes washers only when full.
- Take shorter showers.
- Install a rain barrel and use it for outdoor watering.
- Turn off the water when you are not using it (e.g., while brushing teeth, scrubbing hands or shaving).

For additional water-saving tips, please visit Houston Public Work's Water Conservation webpage at [www.GiveWateraBreak.org](http://www.GiveWateraBreak.org)

If you have additional questions not addressed in this FAQ, please contact the Water Programs team at [WaterConservation@houstontx.gov](mailto:WaterConservation@houstontx.gov).