

FREQUENT QUESTIONS ABOUT STAGE TWO WATERING RESTRICTIONS

What is the Water Use Management Ordinance?

To help conserve our treated drinking water, the City of Austin has adopted a water use management ordinance (Chapter 6-4 of City Code). The ordinance outlines restrictions that may be placed on water use in response to supply and demand triggers or emergency conditions. Violations of this ordinance are Class C misdemeanors, with each instance punishable by a fine of up to \$500.

How are Stage Two water restrictions different from the restrictions that went into effect on May 1st?

In response to the ongoing drought, water restrictions have been elevated to Stage Two. The following additional restrictions are effective as of August 24, 2009 and until further notice (water waste is prohibited year-round):

- Outdoor watering is restricted to once a week on the designated watering day unless using a handheld hose or bucket
- Use of automatic irrigation systems is limited to between 12 a.m. and 10 a.m. on the designated watering day
- Use of outdoor fountains is prohibited except when necessary to provide aeration for aquatic life
- Indoor fountains cannot be filled, refilled or have water added
- Automatic fill valves cannot be used to add water to outdoor swimming pools, wading pools or ponds
- Restaurants may not serve water unless requested by the customer
- The washing of sidewalks, driveways, parking areas, or other paved areas is prohibited except to alleviate an immediate health or safety hazard
- Vehicle washing, except at a commercial carwash, is limited to designated watering times and days unless necessary to alleviate an immediate health or safety hazard
- Charity car washes are prohibited

Why are we in Stage Two restrictions now?

The City's Drought Contingency Plan states that the City Manager may consider water use restrictions in response to supply or demand conditions. The supply trigger for Stage Two restrictions is a combined storage level of less than 900,000 acre-feet in Lakes Travis and Buchanan. That milestone was reached on August 12, 2009; on August 13, 2009 the City Manager implemented Stage Two restrictions effective August 24, 2009.

Watering Day/Time Questions

What is my watering day?

The outdoor watering schedule is determined by street address and property type as follows:

- **Saturday**
Residential customers (4 or fewer units) with addresses ending in an odd number
- **Sunday**
Residential customers (4 or fewer units) with addresses ending in an even number
- **Tuesday**
Commercial and multifamily customers (including common areas of condominiums or homeowners' associations) with street addresses ending in an odd number
- **Friday**
Commercial and multifamily customers (including common areas of condominiums or homeowners' associations) with street addresses ending in an even number

What times can I operate my automatic irrigation system?

You may schedule your system no earlier than 12:01 a.m. on your designated water use day. All cycles must be complete by 10:00 a.m. that same day.

When may I water with a hose-end sprinkler, a soaker hose or drip irrigation?

You may water with a hose-end sprinkler, a soaker hose, or drip irrigation only from 12 a.m. to 10 a.m. and/or from 7 p.m. to 12 a.m. on your assigned outdoor water use day.

What about watering with a hand-held hose?

You may water with a hand-held hose or bucket any time of day and any day of the week (including Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays).

I live in a condo. What is my watering day under Stage 2 restrictions?

Individual owner-operated condo sprinkler systems are treated as residential properties and should follow the residential property watering schedule. Individual watering days are determined by the number of the condo. Odd-numbered condos should water on Saturday. Even-numbered condos should water Sunday.

The irrigation system in the common area of the condo association, operated by the property management, should follow the commercial property watering schedule. Odd-numbered addresses should water on Tuesday and even-numbered addresses should water on Friday. Addresses are determined by the address of the water utility service account.

I live in a mobile home park. When do I water under Stage 2 restrictions?

Individually-operated sprinklers should water by the street address or unit number of the mobile home: odd-numbers should water on Saturday, even-numbers on Sunday. Common areas maintained by the park management should water according to the address associated with the utility account.

What about carriage house or garage apartments marked with a “half” address, or duplexes?

Since these properties are typically on the same side as the “main” house, water according to that number. For example, 2025 ½ Elm Street would water with odd-numbered addresses.

When can the residents of my four-plex water?

Properties with four or fewer units should water according to the residential schedule. Each unit will have the same watering day based on the property’s street address (not unit number). Properties with five or more units should water on the commercial/multifamily schedule.

Enforcement of Water Use Restrictions**What are the potential consequences of a watering schedule violation?**

Violations are a class C misdemeanor, subject to fines of up to \$500 per violation, per occurrence. Fines for specific violations are set by the Municipal Court; fines increase in Stage 2 restrictions. A list of fines (inclusive of court costs) is available at www.cityofaustin.org/court.

How do I report violations of the ordinance?

To report a violation, you may call [Austin 3-1-1](tel:5127773111) or report online at www.WaterWiseAustin.org

When reporting a violation, please be prepared to provide the address, time and date of violation, and type of violation. Additional information such as a business name or specific location on the property is also helpful.

Are you really enforcing the ordinance?

Since the revised Water Use Management Ordinance took effect October 1, 2007, efforts have focused on educating customers. Violators have been given at least one warning to correct problems. Under Stage Two restrictions, enforcement will be increased. There will be no courtesy warning for observed watering violations.

I’ve reported a violation several times – why hasn’t there been a citation?

Additional enforcement personnel are being enlisted to ensure that we can investigate all reported watering violations; patrols and investigations will be scheduled around the clock. However, a staff member must witness and document the violation before a citation can be issued.

Outdoor Fountain Questions

Ornamental fountains can operate if aeration is necessary to preserve aquatic life – what does that mean?

Aquatic life includes any plants or animals which live at least part of their life cycle in water. However, we are unaware of any plant species that require aeration to survive.

Can I operate a recirculating fountain?

Austin City Code does not distinguish between recirculating (recycling) fountains and other types. All fountains should be turned off unless necessary to sustain aquatic life.

Can I operate my fountain if it uses graywater/reclaimed water?

No. State law permits up to 400 gallons per day of residential graywater to be used, but is very strict about allowable applications (subsurface irrigation, foundation watering) and does not allow graywater to be sprayed in the air. Reclaimed water supplied by AWU is not the same as graywater. Reclaimed water is highly treated and may be used in a fountain; however, we are unaware of any current AWU reclaimed customers that operate fountains using reclaimed water.

Can I operate my fountain if I fill it by hand (or with bottled water)?

No. The ordinance does not make a distinction between fountains filled with a hose and those with a potable water connection. And while the ordinance technically applies only to water supplied by Austin Water Utility, it would be difficult for citizens reporting violations or enforcement staff investigating them to identify the water source. We ask that all ornamental fountains be turned off.

I have a water feature in my garden – can I operate it?

Any water features that include falling or streaming water should be turned off to minimize water loss due to evaporation.

I have a small fountain inside my house (on my patio) – does the ordinance apply?

Stage 2 restrictions address outdoor ornamental fountains. Small tabletop fountains that could be used indoors or outdoors may continue to operate.

My fountain supplies water to area wildlife- may I continue to operate it?

The fountain may not be turned on. Under Stage 2 restrictions you may add water with a handheld hose or bucket to provide water to animals or to serve as a birdbath.

When may I refill my birdbath under Stage 2 water restrictions?

You may refill your birdbath with a handheld hose or bucket at any time and on any day.

Why is the splash pad at my local park continuing to operate?

Splash pads are not considered ornamental fountains; they serve a recreational purpose and are not addressed by the water use management ordinance. Generally, these water playscapes use recirculated water.

Can I operate a patio mister?

Misters are not addressed under the Stage 2 ordinance; however, we ask that you consider postponing the use of your mister during the exceptional drought.

Restaurants Serving Water

Can we serve water to customers who request it?

Yes.

We normally serve bottled mineral water when patrons are seated – can we continue to do this?

Yes. The restrictions apply to the use of water supplied by Austin Water Utility. You would not be allowed to serve tap water that is filtered or carbonated on site unless requested by the customer.

If a citation were to be issued, would it go to the restaurant or the server?

We would prefer to see compliance with the ordinance, but a citation would generally go to the restaurant as the water utility account holder. The court has the authority to reissue a citation if it believes another party is responsible for the violation.

Vehicle & Surface Washing**Can I wash my driveway?**

Stage Two water restrictions prohibit the washing of sidewalks, driveways, parking areas, or other paved areas except when necessary to alleviate an immediate health or safety hazard.

How do Stage Two water restrictions affect car washing?

Cars may be washed on your designated outdoor water use day from 12 a.m. to 10 a.m. and from 7 p.m. to 12 a.m. You must use a hand-held bucket or a hose equipped with a shut off nozzle. You may wash your car at a commercial carwash at any time and on any day.

Discharge of cleaning agents to the storm drain system and waterways is considered polluting and illegal. Vehicles and other mobile equipment washed on private property should use biodegradable soap or plain water; it is also acceptable to wash cars on grass provided there are no off-site discharges to a storm drain system or waterway. Report illegal car wash discharges to the 24-hour Pollution Hotline at 974-2550.

We already had a charity car wash scheduled – can we still hold the event?

No charity car washes are permitted during Stage 2 restrictions.

Do the Stage 2 restrictions affect pressure washing?

Washing driveways, sidewalks or other paved surfaces is prohibited except to alleviate an immediate health or safety threat. Washing of commercial establishments is permitted where health/safety is an issue, such as around fuel pumps or areas around trash containers. Washing to remove debris or trash is not allowed.

I have a pressure washing business. Can I still serve my customers?

Businesses may continue to serve customers where pressure washing is needed to alleviate an immediate health or safety threat. We ask that where possible, customers use a broom to remove debris, or for liquid or fuel spills, absorb and dispose of the contaminants.

I have mobile car wash business; what rules apply to me?

Vehicle washing is limited to the hours of 12 a.m. to 10 a.m. and from 7 p.m. to 12 a.m. with a hand-held bucket or hose with a positive shut-off nozzle. For businesses that travel to wash cars on-site, washing should coincide with that property's assigned watering day. For example, a business washing a vehicle at 625 Main Street would need to do so on a Tuesday. Cleaning agents may not be discharged to a storm drain or waterway; report illegal discharges to the 24-hour Pollution Hotline at 974-2550.

Golf Courses**How do Stage Two restrictions affect golf courses?**

Irrigation of golf fairways is limited to before 10 a.m. or after 7 p.m. on the designated watering day. Golf tee and green irrigation is allowed every other day if a plan has been filed with the City to establish the irrigation schedule.

How do I submit a golf course watering plan?

Customers may submit a letter outlining a watering plan along with a property map to watercon@ci.austin.tx.us, or call 974-2199 with questions.

I see a golf course watering every day – is that allowed?

Most area golf courses are supplied with reclaimed water, which is exempt from water use restrictions. However, courses operated by the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department have agreed to follow the once-per-week watering schedule despite the use of reclaimed water. In some cases, however, these locations may have a

large property variance allowing them to divide the property into sections. Each section will be watered only once per week, but some sections may be watered on a different day than typically assigned to their address.

Variances

I'm putting in a new landscape. Do these restrictions apply to me?

AWU will consider new landscape variances on a case-by-case basis. Generally speaking, new landscape variances will be granted when installation is at the time of construction of a new building or a necessary erosion control measure required by the Watershed Protection development or a government capital improvement project. Other types of landscape installations should be delayed until Stage 2 restrictions are lifted. Policies are subject to change as drought conditions persist or worsen.

How much can someone water on a new landscape variance?

New landscape variances are limited to the first 30 days after installation; customers may apply no more than three-quarters of an inch of water to the landscape. During the first 10 days, the property may be watered on any day at any time. For the next 10 days, irrigation may occur every other day before 10 a.m. and/or after 7 p.m. The final 10 days of the variance allow watering every third day before 10 a.m. and/or after 7 p.m. Once the variance expires, the current watering schedule must be followed.

Can I get a variance for changing out the color beds on my property?

No. These areas should be watered on your watering day, or by hand.

What if I can't water my entire property in one day?

Large properties where the irrigation system is incapable of covering the property under the mandatory watering schedule may apply for a variance. You must submit a completed Large Property Variance Request Form along with a site map and a proposed watering schedule. This variance allows properties to be divided into sections, but each section may be watered no more than the current schedule -- once per week under Stage 2 restrictions.

What if I already have a Large Property Variance?

Customers with existing variances to water large properties must reduce watering to one day per week, per section as follows:

- Sections watered Tue/Fri -- Stage Two watering day is Tuesday
- Sections watered Wed/Sat -- Stage Two watering day is Wednesday
- Sections watered Thurs/Sun -- Stage Two watering day is Thursday

What other situations are eligible for variances?

Variance forms for dust abatement or health and safety needs are available at www.WaterWiseAustin.org. In extremely limited circumstances, other variances may be granted by the AWU director; requests should be directed in writing to watercon@ci.austin.tx.us or AWU Conservation Division at P.O. Box 1088, Austin, TX 78767. Please note that variances will not be granted for overseeding lawns, conflicts with trash pickup, or lawn maintenance schedules.