

Water Restrictions FAQs - September, 2011

Water Restrictions FAQs

1. Why are residents being asked to conserve water?

Water restrictions have been imposed in Christchurch because of earthquake damage to the water reticulation network, reservoirs and well fields.

Christchurch residents are being asked to conserve water now to avoid further strict water restrictions this summer.

On hot summer days, Christchurch uses up to four times the annual daily average winter water volume. Unfortunately, the compromised well field, water reticulation and storage system can not handle this high summer demand.

If Christchurch does not take steps to limit water consumption over the peak summer period, there is a risk that during hot summer days the city may have problems maintaining fire-fighting pressures.

2. If I am to limit my outdoor water use, I'd like some more information about the damage to the water infrastructure.

There are three elements of the Christchurch water supply infrastructure that have been severely damaged by the September earthquake. These include:

a) **Reticulation Network – breaks to pipes.** These have been repaired and the Council is in the process of replacing approximately 150kms of water main and sub-mains to restore the infrastructure to its pre-earthquake condition.

b) **Storage Facilities – four reservoirs have been damaged.** The Denton and Sockburn reservoirs have already been repaired and the Worsley's Spur reservoir is being designed for replacement this year (2011). Huntsbury reservoir is under repair but will only provide 50% of its previous storage.

c) **Wells/bores** – the Council normally has 174 deep wells that supply water into the City's reticulation system. Of these wells:

- 20 wells need to be redrilled
- 55 have been repaired to date
- 27 are in need of repair
- 72 have no issues

The repair bill for the wells alone is estimated to be \$17 million.

3. When will water restrictions start and how long will they last?

Level 3 Water Restrictions for Christchurch city will begin in the first week of October 2011 and will finish in approximately February or March 2012.

In detail Level 3 means:

- No one waters on Mondays.
- Alternative day use of hand-held hoses on alternate days.
- Residents with odd-numbered street addresses can water their gardens on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays.
- Residents with even-numbered street addresses can water on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.
- Sprinklers, garden irrigation systems and unattended hoses are not permitted at any time.
- Car washing is permitted on the allocated day.

Level 4: Total public water supply hosing and irrigation ban.

4. What can I do to reduce my outdoor water usage and prevent water restrictions going to the next level?

Overall, the most preventable form of water over-use is people watering their gardens over summer. The following tips can help reduce water usage:

- Check taps and your water meter for leaks (see the link via this webpage)
- Use mulch to keep your garden cool and moist.
- Water the garden at cooler times of the day, in the morning or evening, to minimise evaporation and water wastage. Avoid watering on windy days (especially in north westerly conditions) as the wind quickly evaporates water.
- Do not hose down paths and driveways – use a broom or blower.
- Use a gun nozzle on your hose – this makes it easier to turn the water on and off, preventing water wastage, and it's easier to direct water where it is required.
- Use a bucket filled with water to wash your car.

For more tips follow us on Facebook: www.facebook.co.nz/ChristchurchCityCouncil

Unattended watering of a garden is not permitted (i.e. no use of automated sprinkler systems whilst restrictions are in place).

For more help, talk to your garden centre or local landscape supplier.

5. What is compost or mulch – what's the difference? How do I use it on my plants?

Compost is any kind of decayed, organic plant or animal matter. Its nutrient-rich composition acts as a natural fertilizer for your plants. Mix compost with your soil before planting for the best results.

Mulch is any material placed around plants as a protective covering for the purpose of reducing weeds around the plants, increasing or decreasing soil temperature or retaining moisture around the plant. Mulches can be organic such as compost, wood chips, grass clippings, or hay to name a few.

Used together, compost and mulch are an ideal, cost-effective way to keep your plants moist and healthy over the drier months of the year.

6. I use a dripper hose which I think is more efficient than a gun nozzle, why can't I use this instead?

Dripper hoses actually use more water over time than hand-held gun nozzles. For this reason dripper hoses are not permitted during the water restriction period.

As an example, a thousand homes with a leaking tap can waste 778,000 litres in just one month. To put this into perspective, there are approximately 365,000 dwellings in Christchurch.

	Drip Vol (ml)	Litres per minute	Litres per hour	Litres per Day	Litres per Month	Premises (1,000)
one tap	0.30	0.02	1.08	25.92	778	777,600
two taps	0.60	0.04	2.16	51.84	1,555	1,555,200
three taps	0.90	0.05	3.24	77.76	2,333	2,332,800

7. I operate a commercial business – do the same rules apply for residential water restrictions – are there any exceptions?

We understand that the water restrictions will have an impact on commercial businesses, particularly those which rely on their gardens and surrounds.

Commercial businesses with gardens (e.g. Sanitarium or wedding venues) will have to comply with the water restrictions. Commercial operations with irrigation systems must also comply with the restrictions. Water at commercial premises that is necessary for the productivity of that business is not affected by these restrictions. **Industries that require water for production are exempt from the Level 3 Water Restrictions. However, a commercial business that operates on a residential property (eg gardening companies such as Jim’s Mowing) have to abide by the residential property’s allocated day.**

Q: As part of my car sales business, I need to wash my stock on a daily basis. Do the restrictions apply to me?

A: As per the restrictions, if you draw water from the public supply, you are able to use water to wash your vehicles on your allocated day using hand-held hoses and buckets only. Car groomers need to abide by these restrictions as well.

Q: I need to wash my coach every day to maintain the quality of my fleet - do the restrictions apply?

A: As per the restrictions, if you draw water from the public supply, you are able to use water to wash your vehicles on your allocated day using hand-held hoses and buckets only.

Q: I run a garden centre - do the restrictions apply?

A: Garden centres and nurseries are exempt from the restrictions as they require water as part of their daily operation.

However, Council requests all water users to conserve water and prevent waste.

This is a frustrating time, however, if everyone does their bit to help now, the long term benefits will be felt across both the residential and commercial communities of Christchurch.

8. I own a commercial gardening service – what do the restrictions mean for me?

Regardless of whether you are working on a residential or commercial property (upkeep of the gardens) the water restrictions still apply. This is the city wide issue, everyone must do their bit to ensure we avoid total watering bans this summer. (See #7 above)

Q: Do the restrictions apply to schools and the maintenance of their grounds?

A: Yes the Level 3 water restrictions rules apply. School swimming pools can be filled on the school's allocated day - first thing in the morning or last thing at night - off peak. Unattended watering, irrigation and sprinkler systems are not permitted. Hand-held hosing only for gardens and grounds.

9. There is no damage in my part of town so why is my area restricted?

Christchurch's water system is pressurised through inter-connected pipes across the city. If one area loses water pressure due to high demand, another area needs to supply water so the effects can be widespread.

It's important for everyone to realise that this is a city-wide issue. The city has suffered damage to wells in all areas of town, including areas that do not appear to have much above ground damage. All Christchurch residents need to comply with the restrictions now, if we are going to be able to supply the indoor water residents need this summer.

Q: Can I still fill my pool?

A: Yes. Using a hand-held hose, you can fill your pool (including paddling pools) on your allocated day. If your pool is large, please fill it in the evening, after 8pm (off-peak demand) using a hand-held hose.

10. What will happen if restrictions are not followed?

Restrictions are based on consumption level. If consumption is not kept below the target figure restrictions will be increased. Once restrictions are activated, they will stay in place until the end of the summer season.

11. My neighbour is watering their garden at all times of the day and week, how can I make them aware of the restrictions?

We are encouraging communities to get involved and share their ideas on how to help each other conserve water.

If you know someone who is ignoring the water restrictions, please tell them about the restrictions and why it is important for the city to observe them. If you know someone who continues to ignore the restrictions and your efforts to explain their importance are disregarded, please contact the Council.

Procedures are in place to promote the water saving message for water users who repeatedly ignore the restrictions.

12. What is the legal basis for the restrictions?

The restrictions are imposed under clause 14 of the Water Related Services Bylaw 2008 which states that: "No person may use any water, or allow any water to be used in contravention of any restriction or prohibition made under this clause." The breach of a water restriction is an offence under the Local Government Act 2002, and may also amount to the wastage of water under that Act.