

New Water Wise Rules

22 June 2009

General

Q What are Water Wise Rules?

A Water Wise Rules are simple, common sense every day actions to replace drought restrictions in Sydney, the Illawarra and the Blue Mountains.

The new Water Wise Rules are:

- All hoses must now have a trigger nozzle.
- Watering is allowed before 10 am and after 4 pm on any day – to avoid the heat of the day.
- No hosing of hard surfaces such as paths and driveways, but washing vehicles is allowed.
- Fire hoses may be used for fire fighting activities only.

Q When do they apply?

A Water Wise Rules were announced on Sunday 21 June and began the following day on Monday 22 June.

Q Who do Water Wise Rules apply to?

A Water Wise Rules apply to all Sydney Water customers, including residents, business and government.

Q Why introduce Water Wise Rules to replace restrictions?

A The NSW Government considered storage levels, rainfall forecasts and additional water sources, such as recycling and desalination. This, together with the savings made by the community means greater Sydney's water supply is in a much stronger position. The total storage in the dams has been about 60% for the past year and is currently 61.3% (22 June 09). However, we still need the community to continue to be water wise.

Q How do they differ from drought restrictions?

A Water Wise Rules provide more flexibility as you can choose which day to water and how you water. However, it is still important for all of us to use common sense and not waste water.

Q Does this mean the drought has broken?

A Yes in greater Sydney, as the total storage in the dams has been about 60% for well over a year. According to the Bureau of Meteorology between June and August, the chance of exceeding the median rainfall is 50%.

Q Doesn't the community want to keep restrictions?

A We have found that there is more support for introducing lower level rules (Water Wise Rules) than keeping drought restrictions. Support grows especially when the community understands there is more recycling underway and desalination is coming on line from the summer of 2009-10.

Q How much water will Water Wise Rules save?

A We expect to save about 8% in the first year, especially if the community keeps up many of the habits adopted during the drought.

Q What are Sydney Water and the Government doing to help save water?

A The NSW Government developed the Metropolitan Water Plan, which includes a range of measures to secure Sydney's water supply including:

- Recycled water to provide 12% of Sydney's water needs by 2015. This includes large scale and smaller, localised recycling schemes.
- Building a desalination plant that can provide up to 15% of Sydney's water supply
- Offering a range of rebates and incentives to help businesses, government, schools and households use water efficiently. This together with Sydney Water inspecting 21,000 km of water mains a year for leaks can save 24% of our water needs by 2015.

Q How will Water Wise Rules be enforced?

A Sydney Water patrols will respond to reports of alleged breaches. Fines of \$220 for individuals and \$550 for businesses apply.

Q Who is responsible for introducing Water Wise Rules?

A In September 2007, the NSW Government announced new common sense Water Wise Rules would begin once dam levels rose enough. In addition to storage levels the Government also considered rainfall forecasts.

Sydney Water is responsible for implementing and communicating to customers on the Water Wise Rules.

Q When will drought restrictions be reintroduced?

A Drought restrictions will continue to be part of Sydney's emergency drought response because they can deliver large water savings in times of water shortage.

As part of the current review of the 2006 Metropolitan Water Plan, the NSW Government is reviewing the best water restrictions regime for future droughts. If storage levels fall significantly while this review is underway, the Minister for Water would consider introducing the following interim measures:

- No Level 1 restrictions (Water Wise Rules in place)
- Level 2 restrictions to be introduced at 45%

- Level 3 restrictions to be introduced at 40%.

Q Will the cost of water and services continue to increase?

A In 2008, IPART announced price increases for water and wastewater services, spread over four years.

The increase is to fund Sydney Water's commitments under the Metropolitan Water Plan, to maintain its networks and develop key infrastructure.

Sydney Water's prices are set by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART), not Sydney Water or the NSW Government.

Sydney Water continues to provide a range of assistance to customers in financial difficulty, either directly or through a network of accredited community welfare agencies. One way Sydney Water does this is by funding payment assistance vouchers.

Q Will information on Water Wise Rules be available in other languages?

A Sydney Water will provide information in:

- Arabic
- Italian
- Vietnamese
- Greek
- Chinese.

These communities are the five largest non-English speaking communities in Sydney. The information will be available on Sydney Water's website at sydneywater.com.au.

Using water wisely

Q I live in an apartment and don't have a garden – what can I do to save water?

A There are many ways we can all be water wise indoors as well as outdoors. For example:

- take shorter showers
- wait until your washing machine or dishwasher is full before using
- turn off the tap when you are brushing your teeth, cleaning dishes or preparing food
- use the half flush on your toilet when possible.

Q What are people living in apartments being asked to do?

A Residents living in apartments are encouraged to take shorter showers, only use the washing machine or dishwasher when they have a full load and use the half flush on toilets whenever possible.

Q Why do the rules only focus on people with gardens?

A About 25% of average water use is in the garden and there are simple, common sense things we can do like not hosing in the middle of the day, when evaporation is high.

Fines

Q Will there be fines?

A Yes, fines will apply - \$220 for individuals and \$550 for businesses.

Q Who will enforce the fines?

A Authorised officers will respond to reports of alleged breaches.

Q What powers do authorised staff have?

A Authorised staff can enter customers' properties to investigate whether Water Wise Rules are being breached. Authorised staff can also issue fines for breaches.

If there is nobody present at the property, the authorised staff can issue an infringement notice to the property owner by post. It is then up to the property owner to either pay the fine or complete a statutory declaration indicating who was responsible for the infringement.

Q Can I report someone in the community who I think is breaching the Water Wise Rules?

A If you see a breach of Water Wise Rules, you can report it to Sydney Water at sydneywater.com.au or by calling 13 20 92. Sydney Water will not issue a fine based on a report from a customer. We must witness the offence before an infringement notice is issued.

Q How do I pay the fine if I have received an infringement notice?

A You must pay through the State Debt Recovery Office – just like paying a parking ticket. Details of how to pay are on the infringement notice.

Q What do I do if I receive a fine but I was not responsible for the infringement?

A If you are a landlord and do not reside at the property where the offence took place, you simply complete a Statutory Declaration and send it to the State Debt Recovery Office providing details of the agreement including the name of the person who leases the property.

Alternatively, you may elect to have the matter heard in court.

If you believe that there were exceptional circumstances that required you to breach Water Wise Rules, you can write to the State Debt Recovery Office.

Q How many fines have been issued since water restrictions were first introduced?

A Since mandatory restrictions were introduced in late 2003, Sydney Water has issued over 6,900 fines.

Exclusions

Q Are there exclusions for Water Wise Rules for households?

A If you are establishing a new lawn, you may use sprinklers and watering systems as needed for 14 days from the date of installation. After 14 days, sprinklers and watering systems may only be used before 10 am and after 4 pm.

You may also hose a path, driveway, concrete and other paved surface during construction or for health, safety, emergency, and surface discolouration reasons. These should be readily identifiable to an authorised officer.

Examples include:

Construction

- Preparing a surface for painting or resealing.
- Cleaning surfaces before selling or leasing a property.
- Rinsing surfaces after construction activity provided that the area is initially cleaned using a shovel and broom.

Health

- Cleaning the BBQ or outdoor food preparation areas.
- Cleaning spilt food or drink.
- Cleaning after accidents.
- Cleaning animal droppings.
- Cleaning areas affected by sewer overflows.
- Cleaning school toilet blocks.

Safety

- Removing a build up of mould or moss.

Surface discoloration

- Removing graffiti.
- Removing oil stains.
- Removing a build up of rust.

If customers are unsure, they should contact Sydney Water by visiting sydneywater.com.au or calling 13 20 92.

Q If I have a rainwater tank do Water Wise Rules still apply?

A Not for the water used from the tank, provided it is not topped up from the drinking water supply.

Q If I use bore water or water extracted from rivers, do Water Wise Rules apply?

A Bore water and water extracted from rivers are excluded from Water Wise Rules. Some government restrictions do apply to bore water and water extracted from rivers, so always check with your local council and the Department of Water & Energy.

Q Can sprinklers and watering systems be used at any time?

A You can only use a sprinkler or watering system before 10 am and after 4 pm unless:

- you have a watering system that uses greywater (the rinse water from your washing machine/shower/bath)
- you are using recycled water from a designated recycled water system
- the water from your rainwater tank is not topped up from the drinking water supply
- you are using bore water or water extracted from rivers (subject to local government restrictions)
- you are involved in firefighting and related activities (professional firefighting, defending your home during bushfire, back burning or fire prevention, etc).

Q Is drip irrigation allowed?

A You can use a drip irrigation system before 10 am and after 4 pm. A drip irrigation system is a pipe or hose with special drip devices that release water slowly, in drips, at ground level near the plant roots.

Q What is a trigger nozzle?

A A trigger nozzle is a device attached to the end of your garden hose that turns off automatically when released from your hand. You can buy a basic trigger nozzle for a few dollars.

Twist type devices are not allowed under Water Wise Rules.

High pressure water cleaning equipment fitted with a mechanism that turns off automatically may be used as an alternative to a trigger nozzle.

Q Are there exclusions for businesses under Water Wise Rules?

A The following groups and individuals may use sprinklers and watering systems as needed:

- Local government
- Commercial nurseries
- Market gardeners
- Commercial growers
- Landscapers
- Mobile garden contractors
- People responsible for the maintenance of bowling greens, cricket wickets, golf tees and greens, croquet, hockey, tennis and racing surfaces
- People using water to cool animals or people.

Businesses must use high pressure cleaning equipment or a hose fitted with a trigger nozzle (provided the flow rate does not exceed 10 litres a minute) to hose paths, driveways, concrete and other paved surface during construction activity or for health, safety, emergency and surface discolouration reasons. The reasons need to be readily identifiable to an authorised officer.

Sprinklers and watering systems may be used as needed to establish a new lawn for 14 days from the date of installation. After the first 14 days, sprinklers and watering systems may be used before 10 am and after 4 pm daily.

Vehicle dealers must only use high pressure cleaning equipment or a hose fitted with a trigger nozzle (provided that the flow rate does not exceed 10 litres a minute) to clean cars, trucks, caravans, boats, farm and construction equipment.

Q Do I need to reapply if I already have an exemption? Are there new stickers for Water Wise Rules?

A There are no exemptions, so there is no need to apply. However, there are some exclusions.

Q How can I apply for an exemption?

A There are no exemptions so there is no need to apply.

Q Is there a closing date for exemption applications?

A There are no exemptions so there is no need to apply.

Q Do mobile car detailers still require bunding or wash mats?

A This is not a Sydney Water regulation. However you must manage any wastewater run off from cleaning operations to comply with the requirements of the local council and the Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC).

Q Do Water Wise Rules apply to metered standpipes?

A Yes, if hoses are connected to a metered standpipe.

Pools

Q If I am installing a new pool can I fill it?

A Yes, provided that the water is taken from a metered supply.

Q If I am renovating my existing pool, can I refill it?

A Yes, provided that the water is taken from a metered supply.

Q Can I refill my existing pool if it's getting low?

A Yes, provided that the water is taken from a metered supply.

Q If I empty my pool for cleaning, can I refill it?

A Yes, provided that the water is taken from a metered supply.

Gardens

Q When can I use my sprinkler or watering system?

A You can use your sprinkler or watering system before 10 am and after 4 pm any day.

Q When can I use my drip irrigation system?

A Drip irrigation can be used before 10 am and after 4 pm any day.

Drip irrigation is a pipe or hose with special low-pressure drip devices that release water slowly, in drips below the ground near the plants root. Examples include integrated drip lines, drip emitters and weeping hoses (like those made from recycled black rubber tyres). Soaker hoses are not a form of drip irrigation. Soaker hoses are usually green and spray water.

Q When can I water my garden with a hand held hose?

A You can water your garden with a hand held hose before 10 am and after 4 pm as long as it is fitted with a trigger nozzle. Watering your garden early in the morning, or late in the evening, reduces water loss through evaporation.

Q Can I leave my hose on the ground or hung over a tree branch?

A Yes, as long as the hose is fitted with a trigger nozzle and it is before 10 am and after 4 pm.

Q When can I water with a bucket or watering can?

A You can water your garden with a bucket or watering can at any time.

Q Can I use a high pressure cleaner to hose my driveways and paths?

A You should generally use a broom. In some circumstances, when it is not possible to you a broom, driveways, paths and paved areas may be cleaned using a high pressure cleaner. Examples include:

Construction

- Preparing a surface for painting or resealing.
- Cleaning surfaces before the sale or lease of a property.
- Rinsing surfaces after construction provided the area is initially cleaned using a shovel and broom.

Health

- Cleaning the BBQ or outdoor food preparation areas.
- Cleaning spilt food or drink.
- Cleaning after accidents.
- Cleaning animal droppings.
- Cleaning areas affected by sewer overflows.

Safety

- Removing a build up of mould or moss.

Surface discoloration

- Removing graffiti.
- Removing oil stains.
- Removing a build up of rust.

If customers are unsure if they are allowed to use a high pressure cleaner, they should visit sydneywater.com.au or phone Sydney Water on 13 20 92.

Q If I have a gardener or a contractor who works in my garden, do they have to comply with Water Wise Rules?

A No, mobile contract gardeners and landscapers are allowed to use sprinklers and watering systems as part of their work activities and can use them after 10 am and before 4 pm.

Q Do the Water Wise Rules apply to children's toys like slip'n'slides?

A No, children can play under sprinklers on hot days.

Q What do sprinklers, watering systems and drip irrigation mean?

A Sprinklers – an attachment to a garden hose or fixed pipe that can be left unattended to emit water over a given area.

Watering system – a fixed or permanent system with either single or multiple watering zones, controlled by a manual tap, electronic or mechanical timer.

Drip irrigation – a pipe or hose with special low-pressure drip devices that release water slowly, in drips below the ground near the plants root. Examples include integrated drip lines, drip emitters and weeping hoses (like those made from recycled black rubber tyres). Soaker hoses are not a form of drip irrigation.

Q Am I allowed to clean my garbage bin?

A Cleaning your garbage bins is allowed, provided you are using a hose fitted with a trigger nozzle. Do this on the grass whenever possible.

Buildings

Q Am I allowed to wash my house?

A You can wash building structures, windows, walls, gutters and roofing using a hose fitted with a trigger nozzle or with high pressure water cleaning equipment.

Q What part of my house can't I wash?

A You are able to wash any part of your house with a hose fitted with a trigger nozzle. However, you cannot wash paths, driveways, concrete or pavements at any time unless it is for health and safety reasons.

Q Are there rules on using a high pressure cleaning device at home?

A High pressure cleaning devices may be used to clean walls, roofing, gutters and vehicles at home. Paths, driveways, concrete or pavements cannot be cleaned with high pressure cleaning equipment unless it is for health and safety reasons.

Q I am building / cement rendering a brick fence. Can I hose it down before / afterwards?

A Yes, as long as your hose is fitted with a trigger nozzle. You can also use high pressure cleaning equipment that shuts off automatically.

Q Can I wash the floor area of my balcony/verandah/patio?

A Yes, as long as your hose is fitted with a trigger nozzle. However, you cannot hose paths, driveways, concrete or pavements etc unless it is for health and safety reasons.

Vehicles

Q Can I wash my car?

A Yes, under Water Wise Rules you can wash and rinse vehicles with a hand held hose fitted with a trigger nozzle.

Q Should I wash my car on the lawn?

A Wherever possible, try to wash your car on the lawn. This way you can avoid stormwater pollution, save water, as well as water and fertilise your lawn. Car shampoos use phosphates that are similar to many fertilisers.

Q Can I wash my boat or caravan?

A Yes, under Water Wise Rules you can wash and rinse boats with a hand held hose fitted with a trigger nozzle.

Q Can I wash my motorbike?

A Yes, under Water Wise Rules you can wash and rinse a motorbike with a hand held hose fitted with a trigger nozzle.

Q Can I wash my car at car wash outlets?

A Yes, vehicles can be washed at car wash outlets that comply with Water Wise Rules and use trigger nozzles on their hoses.