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New water-use restrictions approved for Rancho California Water District customers

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The Press-Enterprise

Nighttime irrigation will become a way of life for many Rancho California Water District customers after the district's Board of Directors on Thursday unanimously approved mandatory water-use restrictions to cope with a major supplier's cutback.

The restrictions, which take effect July 1, require homeowners and businesses to water their landscapes between 8 p.m. and 7 a.m. Those who repeatedly and flagrantly break the rules face stiff financial penalties.

The district serves more than 130,000 people in a 150-square-mile region consisting of Temecula, parts of Murrieta and nearby unincorporated areas.

The restrictions are part of Stage 3 of the Temecula-based district's five-stage water contingency plan.

The district has been in Stage 2, which calls for voluntary cutbacks, since 2008. The fifth stage is for extreme shortages and involves severe cuts to farmers and strict limits on all nonessential outdoor water use.

The new restrictions are a ripple effect from a 10 percent supply cutback announced earlier this year by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the district's main water provider. Metropolitan is grappling with less water delivered via Northern California and the state's chronic drought conditions.

While there are no limits on what days of the week landscapes can be watered, the district is asking residents to water every other day at most, and to run pop-up sprinklers 10 minutes at a time and rotor sprinklers 20 minutes at a time. Businesses are asked to irrigate only twice a week.

Exemptions are made for landscapes watered by "smart" irrigation controllers that make adjustments based on weather.

The restrictions also require new landscaping to meet Metropolitan's "California Friendly" standards. Decorative fountains are discouraged.

In addition, the restrictions require brooms, not hoses, to be used to clean driveways and other hard surfaces. And the rules forbid charity car washes on commercial property unless a recycled water system is in place.

District officials say they will work in the coming weeks to educate the public about the restrictions.

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New Rules

The Rancho California Water District in Temecula is imposing mandatory water-use restrictions. The new rules are designed to save water and lessen the blow from water supply cutbacks.

Landscaping: Homeowners may water their landscapes only between 8 p.m. and 7 a.m. There is an exception for "smart" irrigation systems that adjust water flow based on the weather. Residents are asked to water no more frequently than every other day, while businesses are asked to irrigate their landscapes twice a week.

No hosing off: The restrictions also ban the use of hoses to clean off driveways, sidewalks and other hard surfaces.

Source: Rancho California Water District