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Los Angeles residents reducing water and power use

Strict watering restrictions and energy efficiency programs at the DWP have resulted in decreases, city officials say.

By Phil Willon

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Heeding calls to conserve water and power, Los Angeles residents have significantly reduced water use and installed enough energy-efficient appliances and compact fluorescent light bulbs to save an amount of power equal to that used by 53,000 homes, city officials said Wednesday.

"Angelenos didn't just meet the challenge, they exceeded it," Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa said at a Wednesday morning news conference.

With strict watering restrictions that limit landscape irrigation to Mondays and Thursdays, the amount of water used by city residents in July declined by 17% compared with the same month the year before, Villaraigosa said.

City officials also estimated that energy efficiency programs at the Department of Water and Power, which serves the city's roughly 4 million residents as well as businesses and government agencies, saved 318 gigawatt-hours in fiscal year 2008-09. Among those programs, the DWP has provided 2.4 million compact fluorescent light bulbs to 1.2 million residences, 13,650 free Energy Star-rated refrigerators in exchange for old models and provided rebates for energy-saving windows, air conditioners and swimming pool pumps.

During the news conference, the mayor also addressed a television news report that the Getty House, the mayor's official residence in Windsor Square, had repeatedly violated city lawn-watering restrictions. KNBC-TV Channel 4 showed that Getty House sprinklers were turned on in the wee hours of the morning on days when lawn watering is prohibited.

Villaraigosa said he had been unaware of the violations and has since found out that there was a "glitch" in a high-tech landscape irrigation system installed at the Getty House two years ago. He said the problem is being fixed.

The 22,000-square-foot property includes a backyard fountain, a tennis court and lush landscaping. It serves as both the mayor's private residence and as a public venue regularly used for official city events.

Because of the new water-efficient irrigation system, the mayor said outside water use at the Getty House has dropped 70% since he moved into the residence in late 2005. Water use inside the home has declined 67% during that same period, he said, although during that time the mayor separated from his wife and she no longer lives at the Getty House.

In 2007, The Times reported that Villaraigosa and his family, before moving into the Getty House, used almost twice as much water at their Mount Washington home compared with typical property owners with similar-sized lots in that area.

Villaraigosa blamed his comparatively high water use at Mount Washington on gophers that chewed holes through a rubberized drip- irrigation system, and said he did not notice increases in his water bill because his wife handled the

payments.

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