

Headline: Water district imposes cutbacks; Long drought takes its toll

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In an effort to stretch diminishing water supplies, Las Virgenes Municipal Water District (LVMWD) has notified the agricultural customers in its service area that they must reduce potable water use by 30 percent effective Jan. 1, 2008.

The LVMWD Board of Directors is also requesting a 10 percent cutback in potable water consumption by residential and commercial customers.

"Over the past year, Southern California water agencies have been meeting demand by drawing upon water stored from previous wet years," said John Mundy, LVMWD general manager. "With no relief to the drought in sight, we must take steps now to ensure we have adequate supplies for the coming year."

The water conservation actions are need to refill depleted storage reservoirs, Mundy said. In addition, water managers face a courtordered 30 percent reduction in the amount of supplies they receive from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

LVMWD receives all of its water from the delta via the State Water Project.

To help achieve the new conservation goals, LVMWD is offering its customers free water use surveys. Conservation information also can be found on the district's website, www.LVMWD.com.

The water district says the following steps can be taken to cut back on wasted water.

- Reduce irrigation times and schedule outdoor watering only every other day. Be sure irrigation systems are off during and immediately after periods of rain. Also be sure sprinkler heads are properly aimed and functioning.
- Repair all leaking toilets or faucets.
- Turn off water when brushing teeth or shaving.
- Take shorter showers. A shower uses less water than a bath.
- Do not wash down driveways and sidewalks with a hose; sweep them with a broom instead.
- Only wash full loads of dishes or laundry.
- Be sure to use a trigger nozzle on the hose when washing a car at home.

"We know that nearly 70 percent of the water delivered in our service area is used outdoors," said Randal Orton, LVMWD's interim director of resource conservation and public outreach.

"That's the easiest place to find savings. If you see water running off a property and flowing along the curb, it's an indicator of a poorly functioning irrigation system that is wasting a lot of water," Orton said.

Mundy said unless conditions improve "significantly," a series of escalating water conservation measures may be enacted.