



Everett Water Supply FAQ

“Voluntary Stage”

August 11, 2015

1. What’s the latest information on water supply?

After the region’s driest May-July and in preparation of a potentially drier-than-normal fall, Everett, Seattle and Tacoma have moved to the second stage of their water shortage response plans – voluntary reduction – and ask customers to reduce water use by 10 percent. The three cities continue to work in partnership to ensure that the entire region is ready for a potential water shortage, if fall rains return late.

2. Why is the “Voluntary Stage” of the plans being activated now?

Water supply conditions constantly change based on river and reservoir conditions, current and forecasted weather, customer water demand, forecasted water supply conditions, and other factors. We want people to start reducing their water use now, which will increase our supply for the winter.

3. How will reducing water use by 10 percent address the potential water shortage situation? For example, will it buy us an extra week of supply? Two weeks? A day?

Water supply conditions are highly variable and dependent on weather. Given that variability, it’s difficult to give a precise answer to the question. However, we can estimate that a 10 percent reduction in water use would equate to about 7 to 10 million gallons per day, given current water use rates. That is a substantial amount that will help extend the water supply.

4. Does Everett have enough water for the summer and into the fall?

Everett has sufficient water for people and fish flows for summer and into the fall, when it typically begins to rain. In the event that fall rains return late, it will be necessary to have additional water stored in our reservoirs. That is why we are asking customers to reduce their water use now, in case we need extra water for the winter.

5. If water consumption drops by 10 percent by the end of August, will Everett’s water supply be back to normal? If not, what will it take to get back to normal?

Everett’s reservoir is at 64 percent of normal for this time of year. A 10 percent reduction in water use alone will not bring it back up to normal but it will help with fish flows. We also need to see significant rainfall to return to normal.

6. If I reduce my water consumption by 10 percent, can I expect to see a reduction in my water bill?

If flat rate no. Flat rate is not based on consumption. If you have a meter and you use less than the minimum (10 ccf or 7,500 gallons/month), you would not see a reduction. If your account is single family residential and you use more than the minimum amount of water, you would see a slight reduction in the water portion of your bill (sewer is a flat rate). If your account is commercial or multi-family and you typically use more than the minimum amount of water, you could see a slight reduction in both the water and sewer portions of your bill.

7. Why did the region choose 10 percent? That doesn't seem like a lot. Why aren't you asking customers to reduce their water use by 20 or 30 percent?

A 10 percent reduction should give us an adequate cushion at this time. We believe that a 10 percent goal can be attained with voluntary reductions.

8. Every couple of weeks, it seems like Everett is reporting something different and asking customers to do something different. Why does the city's water supply forecasting and messaging keep changing?

Weather, reservoir level, and water consumption all vary so the message will also be changing.

9. I'm worried about our fish population. What is Everett doing to protect fish during this drought?

Everett continues to release water from its reservoirs to help with stream flows for fish on the Sultan River. This provides protection for salmon and steelhead trout.

10. What should customers do now to help?

We are in Phase II of the plan—the Voluntary Stage. Everett, Seattle and Tacoma customers are being asked to voluntarily reduce their water use by 10 percent. Here are some ways customers can reduce their water use both indoors and outdoors.

Outdoor Tips:

- Let your lawn go dormant and limit plant watering to twice a week.
- Water plants before 8 a.m. (best) or after 7 p.m.
- Wash your vehicle(s) at locations that recycle water
- Do only essential pressure washing.
- Minimize refilling swimming pools and hot tubs.
- Turn off water features.
- Fall is the best time for planting.

Indoor Tips:

- Reduce your showering time
- Check for and fix leaks.
- Wash only full loads of laundry and dishes.
- Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth or shaving
- Don't pre-rinse dishes.
- If purchasing fixtures/equipment, choose water-efficient models.

Business Tips:

- Encourage reduced showering times at your facilities.
- Serve water only on request.
- Check for and fix leaks.
- Wash only full loads of laundry and dishes.
- Provide new towels only on request.
- Check cooling towers for overflow and excessive blowdown.
- If purchasing fixtures/equipment, choose water-efficient models.

Additional water saving tips are available at savingwater.org.

11. If you are concerned about a possible water shortage now, why are you waiting to implement mandatory conservation measures?

We have moved to the next stage of the plan – “Voluntary” – because the potential for a future water shortage has increased. We would implement mandatory reduction measures (Stage 3 of our Drought Response Plan) if the potential increases to the point at which mandatory reductions are needed.

12. How important is the reduction of demand compared to the arrival of the rain?

Our customers are key partners in making sure there is enough of this precious resource to last until the return of fall rains. If fall rains return as expected, we won't have a water supply problem.

13. When did you first know there could be a possible water shortage? Specific date, please. Why didn't you implement the water shortage plan back when you first realized that? How many gallons could have been saved if you had acted earlier?

We constantly monitor and operate our water supply and use hydrologic models to forecast our water supply outlook. Since May, when our reservoirs were full and the outlook was “good,” unusually hot and dry conditions have impacted the water supply outlook to the point that we activated our Water Shortage Contingency Plan in July and have now moved to the voluntary stage of the plan.

14. Why didn't Everett start asking for water reductions weeks ago when the utility came out and said water supply was "fair?" You didn't mention a water shortage then. What—specifically—has changed since then? Were you excessively confident, given what you're saying now?

We constantly monitor and operate our water supply and use hydrologic models to forecast our water supply outlook. Since May, when our reservoirs were filled successfully and the outlook was "good," unusually hot and dry conditions have caused continued shifts in the water supply outlook. We have more certainty now than we did in May that it will be drier and warmer with El Nino projected to last until spring 2016.

15. We're in the voluntary stage now. How do we determine whether we need to move to the mandatory stage?

Everett is constantly monitoring our water supplies and our system demands. We are also coordinating with local, state, federal and tribal agencies interested in the management of river flows and fisheries, and together making decisions to optimize the use of water resources. If the continued analysis of this data shows that a further reduction in demands is needed to meet the needs of our customers, or the rivers, we will move to the next step in the Drought Response Plan, which is a mandatory reduction in water use.

16. What is the Drought Response Plan?

Everett has a Drought Response Plan, which provides guidelines for Everett to manage water supply and demand when there's a potential or actual water shortage. The plan has four stages that may be phased in over time:

- Stage I: Advisory
- Stage II: Voluntary
- Stage III: Mandatory
- Stage IV: Emergency Curtailment

17. What's the difference between the four stages?

- The advisory stage lets customers know that the potential exists for a water supply shortage and that customers should be especially thoughtful in their use of water.
- The voluntary stage could be put in place when available water sources are not expected to be enough to support normal demands and river flow requirements. In that stage, we would request further water use reduction from customers along with taking steps on our end to reduce use.
- The mandatory stage could be implemented when available water sources plus voluntary reductions are not expected to be enough to meet demands and river flow requirements. Requiring a reduction or elimination of lawn watering is an example of mandatory curtailment.
- The emergency stage would only be implemented in the event of a critical water shortage threatening public health and safety. This type of situation has never occurred in the Everett's history. At this stage, Everett would be authorized to require

increasingly stringent water use restrictions, and to establish rate surcharges designed to reduce water demand.

18. You say Everett monitors water supply carefully. What is involved with this?

We measure precipitation, stream flows, reservoir storage, water consumption and more. This gives a snapshot that we review on a daily basis. We also look at historical trends and use complex hydrologic models that can help project reservoir elevations and river flows, taking into account reservoir inflow, water use for people and fish, and other factors.