

CaIWEP FAQ

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Providing Leadership, Collaboration, and Expertise on California's Unique Water Efficiency Issues

FACT SHEET ON LONG-TERM CONSERVATION LEGISLATION

Overview

On May 31, 2018 Gov. Jerry Brown signed into law two new bills that will require urban water providers throughout California to set new permanent water use targets for their service areas by 2022. Senate Bill 606 (Hertzberg) and Assembly Bill 1668 (Friedman) provide a framework for setting water use targets, as well as implementing and enforcing the new water use requirements. There are no immediate impacts to customers from these new laws.

While many details for implementing the new water use requirements will be determined over the next several years, the overall framework includes:

- A standard for indoor residential water use of 55 gallons per person per day—dropping incrementally to 50 gallons beginning in 2030.
- A standard for outdoor water use (to be determined) based upon and the amount of irrigable landscaped area for a residential or dedicated irrigation commercial account and the community's climate.
- A standard for water loss due to leaks in water system pipes (to be determined).

These three standards will be calculated and added together to represent an overall water use target (in gallons) for the water provider. Although some local water providers in California base their rates on a water budget for each customer, the new state laws do not contain water use targets for individual residents or businesses.

These laws outline an overall framework to guide urban water providers in setting water use targets, which must be approved by the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board). However, urban water providers will determine how their service area can best achieve the new water use target. Urban water providers will set and monitor targets for their service area as a whole (not on an individual basis) and will determine how to help their customers collectively reach the new targets. Urban water providers who do not meet their targets can be fined by the State Water Board (up to \$1,000 per day during non-drought years and \$10,000 per day during drought emergencies). Fines apply to the urban water provider and not to individuals.

In California, droughts are a part of life, and the next dry year is always right around the corner. Californians have consistently shown their willingness to do their part to use water efficiently no matter the weather. Urban water providers look forward to continuing their partnership with customers to implement these new laws and to make water conservation a California way of life.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How will the new laws impact customers?

There are no immediate impacts to customers. Over the next several years, specific water use targets will be set for a water provider's overall service area (not on an individual basis) based upon the standards outlined in the laws. Once water provider-level targets are established in 2022 and implementation begins in 2023, water providers may choose to work with individual households and businesses to increase their water efficiency through available rebates, services and programs.

Will it be illegal to take a shower and wash clothes in the same day, as some media have reported?

No. There is nothing in the laws that specifies when or how often a person may shower or do laundry. The new laws outline an overall framework for setting and meeting water use targets at the water provider level. While the laws' framework does include a goal for individual indoor water use of 55 gallons per person per day beginning in 2022, this applies on an overall system-wide basis (and not an individual basis).

How hard will it be to meet the indoor target of 55 gallons per person per day?

It's important to note that the indoor target of 55 gallons per person per day is not a goal for individual water use but will be measured across a water provider's entire service area and does not include outdoor water use. That said, water industry experts are projecting that many people are already meeting this indoor target or do not have far to go. The Alliance for Water Efficiency has an online water calculator that can estimate how much water a household uses indoors. You can find it at www.home-water-works.org/calculator. Additionally, many water providers offer rebates for indoor fixtures like toilets and clothes washers to incentive customers to upgrade to more efficient WaterSense and ENERGY STAR labeled models.

Will water providers be monitoring and evaluating individual water use as part of the new laws?

There is no requirement in the new laws that individual households must meet a specific target. The new laws provide a framework for setting targets, but those will be applied on a system-wide basis, and progress toward achieving targets will be reviewed on a system-wide basis.

How will the new laws impact businesses in California?

While the new laws do not set specific water use targets for business, they do outline a framework for creating new water efficiency performance measures for businesses—these are recommended actions for specific business sectors to improve water efficiency over time. Performance measures will be determined over the next several years, and the process will include opportunities for public input.

Will individual residents and businesses be fined for not meeting water use targets?

The regulations and associated water use targets are required for the water provider as a whole (including all customers) NOT at the individual resident or business level. Therefore, individuals and businesses will not be fined by the state for not meeting the water provider water use target. However, individuals and businesses may be fined for violating current local water provider water waste ordinances and guidelines. Note that such ordinances and guidelines exist currently and are not new.

What are water providers doing to help implement the law?

Water providers will be working with the State Water Board and others over the next several years to define how the new laws will be implemented. They are also laying the groundwork by investing in research, data and programs at the local level to better understand how the new laws might work within their communities. In the meantime, water providers are continuing to encourage conservation by offering a variety of rebates to increase the efficiency of indoor and outdoor water use through the replacement of older, less efficient fixtures such as toilets, clothes washers and irrigation equipment with newer more efficient models. Check your water provider's website for available rebates and services.

What are the next steps for implementing the new laws?

The laws will now be translated into regulations, which will outline details and rules for implementing the intent of the laws at the local level. Stakeholders (water providers, non-profit organizations and other interested parties) will work together over the next several years with state agencies (including the State Water Resources Control Board and the California Department of Water Resources) to finalize the regulations by the required deadline of 2022.

Why was the new law created?

The new rules were prompted by California's frequent cycles of drought and are meant to better prepare California for the next drought and the future effects of climate change on the state's water supplies. The overall goal is to make water conservation a way of life in California and a permanent part of the state's culture.

When will the new water conservation targets take effect?

Water providers must set new water conservation targets by 2022 and will be expected to begin implementing them by 2023 and every year after that. Again, these targets are service-area wide and not for individual households.

Will residents have to go back to saving water as they did during the drought?

No. The new laws create long term water use targets not short-term conservation targets like those implemented during the drought. The long-term targets are meant to inspire greater efficiency over time rather than mandate short-term cutbacks that require extreme measures such as not watering your lawn or flushing the toilet less.

