

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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GOVERNOR DECLARES WATER EMERGENCY

Due to the continued lack of rainfall and the declining reservoir levels, NJ Gov. Christie Whitman today declared a water emergency in New Jersey and issued mandatory restrictions on outdoor, non-essential water uses statewide.

"The continued lack of rainfall and high water usage have caused the water levels in our major reservoirs to drop at an unacceptable pace," said Whitman. "With no significant rain in the forecast, and with water use continuing at an unprecedented pace, we need everyone to adhere to these mandatory water restrictions."

Restrictions apply primarily to outdoor water use and prohibit the watering of lawns, the non-commercial washing of motor vehicles and the draining or refilling of pools. The restrictions, which are outlined in an administrative order issued by NJDEP Commissioner Bob Shinn, also require that water be served in restaurants only upon request.

In this phase of the emergency, some exceptions apply, such as irrigation for food crops and limited watering of newly seeded or sodded areas. Commercial car washes that recycle water are also exempt.

In addition to the mandatory restrictions, residents are urged to only use washing machines and dishwashers when full, repair leaky toilets, pipes and taps, install water conserving showerheads and faucet aerators, and don't let the water run unnecessarily while shaving and brushing teeth.

The state's major reservoirs are nearly 11 percent below normal, averaging 69.8 percent of capacity. The reservoirs are normally at about 80 percent capacity at this time of year.

Because the drought is having an impact on the entire state, all residents are urged to adhere to the mandatory restrictions, including those with private wells. Many major waterways throughout the state are at historic low flows, which affect groundwater supplies. Well water is also affected by lack of rainfall.

Whitman said Commissioner Shinn will designate a state Drought Coordinator today who will have the authority to order any necessary further restrictions should the water shortage worsen. These could limit residential use and require commercial users to cut back and buy water according to a special emergency rate schedule.

Shinn has already formed a Water Supply Emergency Task Force comprised of representatives from all state departments to help assess drought conditions and

management options. The task force met for the first time today.

The last water emergencies were declared in September 1995 and in April of 1985. Both emergencies lasted about a month and a half.

Effective Friday, DEP will operate a hotline at 1-800 4 ITS DRY for residents to call with questions about the restrictions.

A copy of the Governor's [Executive Order](#) and Commissioner Shinn's [Administrative Order](#) are available on the New Jersey web site.