



Water Conservation Questions and Answers

Why is mandatory water conservation necessary?

There are basically four (4) reasons:

- The Weather - Ninety to ninety-five percent of Sierra Madre's water supply comes from underground aquifers. During the winter months, aquifer water levels usually rebound somewhat because of rainfall and lower water use during the cooler, rainy season. Unfortunately the city is experiencing an extended period of below average rain fall. For example, during the rainy season of 2012-2013, the city received only 9.72 inches of rainfall, as compared to the city's average of 19.64 inches.
- Spreading Water – Sierra Madre operates spreading basins where rainwater and water diverted from city streets, the Santa Anita Dam, and Sierra Madre Dam can flow into the settling basins and sink into the underground aquifers. This year due to much lower than normal rainfall and the construction work at the Santa Anita Dam, much less water has flowed into the settling basins. Normally the city "spreads" 1500 acre feet of water, this year the city has only been able to spread 104 acre feet of water.
- Increased Consumption – Comparing April 2012 and April 2013, water consumption had increased by more than 50%. There has not been a population increase in Sierra Madre. This means that our existing water customers were using more water because there has not been an increase in water customers.
- Pumping Restrictions – Because of the declining ground water level, the Raymond Basin Management Board has implemented Section VI(3) of the 1984 Raymond Basin Judgment, reducing Sierra Madre's water production right from the East Raymond Groundwater Basin by 47%. This means that Sierra Madre is limited to pumping a little more than half of the amount of water normally pumped from the underground aquifer. Sierra Madre has "credits" that will allow the city to pump additional water, but there are only enough "credits" to last approximately 2.5 years, if water consumption does not decrease. An additional consideration is that pumping these "credits" means pumping water from the aquifer, and the goal of conservation is to pump less water from the aquifer. Lastly, aquifer levels could reach levels where the City's wells would cease functioning; in fact, one well has been shut-down due to low water levels.

How does mandatory water conservation work?

Each water customer will have two base periods, a Summer base and a Winter base. The city will calculate your average bi-monthly water consumption for a "Summer base period" and a "Winter base period." Your "Summer base" and your "Winter base" will be used to determine if your usage places you under a Phase I or a Phase II water conservation limit. (If your Summer or Winter base bi-monthly average consumption, is less than 1200 cubic feet (12 units) of water, you are exempt from mandatory water conservation for that base period.)

- If your "Summer or Winter base" is between 1300 (13 units) and 1700 (17 units) cubic feet, you have a 10% (Phase 1) conservation target.
- If your "Summer or Winter base" is more than 1700 (17 units) cubic feet, you have a 20% (Phase 2) conservation target.

Next, your conservation target will be compared to your actual bi-monthly water consumption on your water bill. If your consumption is less than your target, you will not be assessed any penalties. If your consumption exceeds your target, you will be assessed a penalty.

What are the penalties if I don't conserve? What are the penalties if I exceed my consumption target?

For the first violation, if your actual bi-monthly consumption exceeds your conservation target, you will be assessed a financial penalty of two times the Tier 1 rate, on the amount of water that exceeds your target. From July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014 the Tier 1 rate is \$2.21

If water consumption exceeds your target a second time (and all subsequent times) the surcharge penalty imposed is three times the Tier 1 rate, on the amount of water that exceeds your target.

How is my "average bi-monthly consumption from the base year" calculated and how is my consumption target calculated?

A sample calculation for a "Winter" base period (for the east side of town) is shown below:

Total Water Consumption for the Base Period (Sample Base Period is: 10/15/2012 to 4/15/2013)	Base Period bi-monthly average consumption (The base period consumption is divided by 3 billing cycles)	20% Reduction Goal or "Conservation Target"
150 units (112,200 Gallons)	150 Units / 3 billing cycles = 50 units (37,400 Gallons)	50 units X 80% = 40 Units The Conservation Target is 40 units of water (29,920 gallons)

Note, in the example above, the household's base period average consumption was 50 units of water, so the household is subject to the 20% conservation goal, because the base period average consumption exceeds 17 units.

How much am I required to conserve?

Your required percentage of water conservation is determined by the average amount of water you used during the Summer and Winter base periods. The City will calculate your base period bi-monthly average consumption to determine whether you need to conserve at the 10% or the 20% level. If you use less than 1200 (12 units) cubic feet of water, you do not need to conserve any additional water; if you use between 1300 (13 units) and 1700 (17 units) cubic feet of water, you will need to conserve 10%; if you use more than 1700 (17 units) cubic feet of water, you will need to conserve 20%.

If I stay under my allotted maximum unit usage, can I "bank" that for another billing period?

Unfortunately you may not "carry over" units of water that are below your conservation target, to another billing period. The reason is, we need to reduce the total amount of water that is pumped from the aquifer – if customers were permitted to "carry over" units of water the "carrying-over" could negatively impact the annual, total reduction in water pumped from the aquifer. The goal of mandatory water conservation is to reduce the amount of water being pumped from the aquifer. Providing customers with the ability to "bank" water, would be counter to the goal.

I know I will get penalized if I go over my maximum but will I get any dollar credit if I stay under or use much less than before?"

Unfortunately there are no "billing credits" if you stay under your conservation target.

What are the rules for multi-units accounts?

The City Council recently adopted new rules for multi-unit accounts. For water customer accounts, billed for multiple dwellings on a single water meter, the number of dwelling units will be divided into the bi-monthly consumption to determine the level of required conservation for that account, and to determine any penalties.

Which months are included in the Winter and Summer base periods? UPDATED July 30, 2013

The chart below provides the details regarding which months are included in the Summer and Winter base periods, based upon your billing cycle.

<u>East of Baldwin Avenue</u>			<u>West of Baldwin Avenue</u>		
<i>Graph Period (1)</i>	<i>Bill Date (2)</i>	<i>Billing Period (3)</i>	<i>Graph Period (1)</i>	<i>Bill Date (2)</i>	<i>Billing Period (3)</i>
WINTER					
<i>February</i>	March	December-February	<i>January</i>	February	November-January
<i>April</i>	May	February-April	<i>March</i>	April	January-March
<i>June</i>	July	April-June	<i>May</i>	June	March-May
SUMMER					
<i>August</i>	September	June-August	<i>July</i>	August	May-July
<i>October</i>	November	August-October	<i>September</i>	October	July-September
<i>December</i>	January	October-December	<i>November</i>	December	September-November

Note: Meters are typically read and processed within the first two weeks of the month.

- (1) *Graph Period* refers to the consumption graph printed in the lower left corner of your utility bill.
- (2) *Bill Date* refers to the month that you normally receive your bill.
- (3) *Billing Period* refers to the months when the consumption occurred.

Another way to explaining the Winter and Summer base periods, is:

For customers East of Baldwin Avenue, the Winter base period includes consumption reflected on March, May, and July utility bills for calendar year 2013 (for consumption readings, refer to February, April, and June months on your utility bill graph). The Summer base period includes consumption reflected on the September, November, and January utility bills for calendar year 2012 (for consumption readings, refer to August, October, and December months on your utility bill graph).

For customers West of Baldwin Avenue, the Winter base period includes consumption reflected on February, April and June bills for calendar year 2013 (for consumption readings, refer to January, March and May months on your utility bill). The Summer base period includes consumption reflected on the August, October and December bills for calendar year 2012 (for consumption readings, refer to July, September, and November months on your utility bill).

What is the timing? If I exceed my conservation target, when do I become subject to penalties?

The correspondence included in the envelope is an informational notice that was mailed to all customers. The notice provides information regarding your base period bi-monthly average consumption and your conservation target.

The City’s ordinance requires an official notification on your water bill, before the first violation may be assessed. The letter was not your official notice. The timing of your official notice depends upon when you receive your next water bill.

If you received your water bill the beginning of July 2013, your official notice will be your September 2013 water bill; and no penalties will be assessed on your September 2013 water bill. Penalties (if any) would begin with your November 2013 water bill.

If you receive your next water bill in August 2013, your August 2013 water bill will be your official notice; as such, no penalties will be assessed on your August 2013 water bill. Penalties (if any) would begin with your October 2013 water bill.

What if I think my conservation target is incorrect? What if I think my base period bi-monthly average consumption is incorrect? The Municipal Code section that implements mandatory conservation provides for an appeal process if you think your base allocation, percentage of conservation, or conservation target is incorrect. The appeal form is available on the City's website, or you may contact City hall to request a copy of the appeal form. The appeal process is further described in the City's Municipal Code Section 13.24.170, entitled "Administrative relief".

I recently moved into my house, and my house was vacant for a few months before I moved in; what do I do? I just had twins, so now there are four people living at my house, compared to last year when there were only two people living here; what do I do?

Please see the answer to the question above, "What if I think my conservation target is incorrect."

Where can I read the City's Water Conservation Ordinance?

The City's water conservation ordinance is Chapter 13.24 of the City's Municipal Code. The current, updated version of Chapter 13.24 is available on the City's website under "Water Conservation" on the City's homepage.

Where can I read the City's Resolution adopting mandatory water conservation measures?

Resolution 13-52, adopted on July 9, 2013, is available on the City's website. Look for the "Water Conservation" link on the City's homepage.

Will the City's water department "make more money" because of mandatory water conservation?

The objective of mandatory water conservation is to reduce the amount of water that is pumped from the underground aquifer, or that is imported from other agencies. The goal is not to increase water revenues. In fact, if water conservation goals are achieved by all of our customers, water revenues would decrease. In reality, some of the decreased revenues from increased conservation may be offset by customers who incur penalties because they exceed their conservation targets.

Can't the City simply buy more water from outside sources to allow us to use more water?

Yes, in theory the City can purchase water. In fact, the City Council has recently approved the purchase of imported water from the City's State Water Contractor, the San Gabriel Valley Municipal Water District. The City will refrain from doing so as long as possible because:

- The water from outside sources will be different from the water that is pumped by our wells; with a different taste and water quality.
- The water from outside sources costs roughly 3-times as much as water pumped from the City's own wells. At this time the additional cost is being absorbed by the City's limited water fund financial reserves. Continued reduction of water fund financial reserves could impact the long-term financial sustainability of the City's water department.

As customers, we became aware of the urgent need to conserve water when we received the City's May 2013 notice. How have we been doing, with respect to conserving water?

The good news is that our water customers are conserving water. Current water production figures for the month of June showed an 8.4% reduction. So far, the July production figures are trending toward a 20% reduction (as of July 16, 2013). Thank you for your hard work in helping to conserve water!

If you have any questions, please visit the City's website or call City Hall at (626) 355-7135, during our business hours, from 11:00 am to 5:30 pm on Monday to Thursday.