

# Water rationing <sup>water</sup> to be a way of life <sup>1989</sup>

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SANTA CRUZ — The city water system is not going to run dry, but unless there is more rain, water rationing will become a way of life.

Officials say the restrictions won't inconvenience residents greatly but that businesses, especially those that have grown since 1987, may be hit harder.

The Santa Cruz Water Commission passed a water rationing ordinance Monday. It will go before the City Council Feb. 14 and could become law as early as March 1 — if it is needed.

A Sentinel article printed Tuesday on the ordinance contained some inaccuracies.

Tuesday, City Water Director Bill Kocher explained the situation.

Rationing will not begin until demand starts to drain Loch Lomond Reservoir at a rate that would empty the reservoir before Dec. 31,

or until other water sources begin to fall 19 percent short of demand.

"People don't need to panic. The system is not going to run dry," Kocher said. "But if we don't get any more rain and people think they can keep using water all summer like they used to — they are going to find they can't do that."

As it is now, water rationing appears inevitable, Kocher said. Demand is currently running about 19 percent ahead of supply, requiring that water be taken from Loch Lomond. A month of heavy rains, however, could forestall or even cancel the rationing plans.

Under the ordinance, a set amount of water would be allocated for each home and business, and restrictions would be placed on water use. Those who use more than their allocation would be fined.

The amount of people living at a  
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# Water/ Santa Cruz set to install rationing plan

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residence will determine how much water is allocated for a home. Each residence would be given a base, two-month allocation of 6,750 gallons for one person, and 4,500 gallons for each additional person.

The Water Department will include a questionnaire in the next billing to find out how many people live at each residence, Kocher said.

The big restrictions are on outdoor water use.

Under the ordinance residential watering will be allowed only two days per week and only between 6 p.m. and 11 a.m., thereby avoiding the heat of the day. The Water Department is hoping to cut home irrigation by at least 50 percent.

The washing of cars with hoses, even those with shut-off nozzles, would be prohibited. Cars could be washed with a bucket, however. The spraying down of sidewalks and driveways wouldn't be allowed.

A two-person drought patrol would cruise the city to enforce the ordinance, Kocher said. If people refused to cooperate, the patrol could turn off their water and lock the meter.

Homes and businesses which use more than their allocation would be charged \$25 for every 750 gallons used over the limit.

"I don't really want the money," he said of the steep fine. "The point is not to generate money but to keep people from going over their allocation."

"Basically it's going to be like last summer, only a little more severe."

Businesses will have a harder time staying within their allocation, Kocher said.

Each business allocation will be based upon a similar period in 1987. The water commission chose 1987 because it was the last normal rain year.

"To choose last year when people were conserving would be unfair," Kocher said.

Businesses would be required to cut 10 to 15 percent off the amount of water they used in 1987, if conditions remain as they are, Kocher said.

Business representatives have complained that the ordinance doesn't take into account businesses that have grown since 1987.

Kocher is hard-nosed about such complaints.

"I'm real sorry about it," he said. "I wish we could allow for growth, but how can I look at 6,000 businesses to customize allocations?"

Those who feel they are unable to abide by the allocations can appeal directly to Kocher, who will render an immediate decision. Kocher's decision could also be appealed to an appeal board which has yet to be set up.

For restaurants, the restrictions may mean that no water will be served unless requested, that dishes not be pre-washed or rinsed and that dishwashers are run only when full.

Kocher said that commercial businesses may have to change their landscaping and watering methods.

The Water Department has been criticized for continuing to hook up new customers and developments while the city is facing rationing.

Kocher said the water for new customers is insignificant, and that a moratorium would require a raise in water rates.