

Water Supply 1977
Crisis

Sunday, August 28, 1977 — Santa Cruz Sentinel—3

Whys And Hows Of Water Rationing

The City of Santa Cruz water department has received numerous questions all summer long about the "whys" and "hows" of its water rationing program.

So Sara Piller, the water department's information officer, has been providing answers on the telephone and in discussions with business and other groups to clear up any misconceptions people may have about the program.

Some of the most frequently asked questions have simple answers, Piller reports. And here are some of them, in a question and answer form.

Q. — Why do we have a rationing program?

A. — "The past nine years have been below normal in rainfall. In the two years of the drought, rainfall has been so low that new records have been established. The city water system relies mainly on runoff from rainfall in the watersheds. When rainfall is low, water is not available to meet normal demands."

Q. — How much water am I allocated? How am I supposed to find out?

A. — "Single-family dwellings (one house on one meter) are allocated water on a per person basis.

"Multiple dwellings (two or more houses or units on one meter) are allocated 70 per cent of what was used through that meter in 1975.

"Businesses are allocated 70 per cent of what was used through their present meter in 1975.

"In all cases, your allotment can be determined by telephoning 429-3684 or by visiting Room 105 in city hall.

"Requests for changes in the allotment can be made by coming to Room 105 aso. This office is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays. It is helpful to have your account number with you, but not necessary."

Q. — Can I use less water than my allocation in one billing period and then use more than my allocation in the next billing period?

A. — "No. There is no provision for "banking" water under terms of the emergency ordinance. The program purpose is to conserve as much water as possible on an overall basis."

Q. — Do I have to pay a penalty assessed against me?

A. — "The Santa Cruz City Council adopted a procedure by which penalties assessed under

the rationing program can be adjusted in certain cases.

"The council emphasized, however, that penalties assessed for consumption in excess of valid water allocations will be penalized in full as provided in the water ordinance.

"In other words, the procedures adopted by the council do not amount to a "blanket amnesty" of all penalties.

"If you feel the penalty assessed against you is incorrect or unjustified, you should seek possible redress by coming to Room 105 at city hall Mondays through Fridays between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.. Please bring your bill and any additional information and fill out an "adjustment request form." Until a final determination has been made on your request, you pay the water charges on your bill, but not the penalty.

"Understand, please, that the penalty is not automatically or necessarily removed."

Q. — How can I control someone else's excessive water use?

A. — "This question is asked mainly by landlords, motel owners and business people who provide public restrooms.

"The owners should exercise as much

conservation as they can in the areas they control, that is, by installing water saving devices in toilet tanks, flow restricters in faucets and showers and by turn turning down pressure in fountains. They should also join city and county efforts to educate the public on conservation."

Q. — I didn't get a penalty last billing period for the same amount of water I used in this billing period, and this time I was penalized. How come?

A. — The rationing program became effective March 1. Penalties were given out as of the May 1 billing period.

"In the case of multiple dwellings and businesses, allocations are based on 70 per cent of each bimonthly use in 1975. Any fluctuation in usage in 1975 is therefore reflected in your present allocation.

"You can telephone the department at 429-3684 to learn your allocation for the rationing period, or you can obtain the information by visiting Room 105 at city hall.

"If, at the same time, you wish to request a change in your allocation, you may file a variance in the same office."

More Q's and A's next week.