

Water cutbacks ordered

WATER
SUPPLY
1990

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3-14-90

SANTA CRUZ — With little ado Tuesday night, the Santa Cruz City Council passed an emergency ordinance which is expected to lead to water rationing by May 1.

Four consecutive drought years apparently made the decision easier to make for the council, and easier to take for water customers. The ordinance passed with hardly a whimper.

Water use has been restricted in the past two summers, but water levels remained high enough to avoid mandatory rationing.

This year has been the driest of the past four years, and Water Department Director Bill Kocher said that the water supply this summer is expected to be 670 million gallons less than demand in 1987, the last unrestricted year.

He said the situation is only somewhat better than in 1977, the worst-ever drought year.

The ordinance will implement three stages of action, each more restrictive and triggered by pre-set shortage levels.

The first will impose outdoor watering restrictions April 1. Those restrictions will be similar to those of the past two summers.

Restrictions will primarily pertain to outdoor watering. Residents with odd-numbered addresses

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will be allowed to water on Saturdays, Mondays and Wednesdays. Those with even-numbered addresses may water on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Afternoon watering on any day will be prohibited.

Commercial watering will be allowed on Saturdays, Mondays and Thursdays.

In addition, residential car washing will be restricted to weekends.

Fees for excess residential water use will be imposed at 6,300 cubic feet.

Water use is measured in units of 100 cubic feet (CCF), which equals 748 gallons. The excess fee would be \$5 per 1 CCF for the first five units over the limit and \$25 per CCF beyond that.

Kocher has said he doubts sufficient rainfall will occur to prevent escalation to the second stage of the ordinance — rationing — on May 1.

Rationing would apply to residential customers only. Businesses would remain under water restrictions.

The baseline bi-monthly allocation for single-family, individually metered customers would be 2,100 cubic feet for households of three people or less. Each additional permanent resident will get an additional bi-monthly allotment of 400 cubic feet.

For multi-residential accounts, allocations would be: 1,600 cubic feet for each of two units on the property, 1,300 cubic feet per unit for three or four units on the property, 1,100 cubic feet per unit for 5 to 39 units and 7,000 cubic feet per unit for 40 or more units on the property.

Business, industrial and commercial irrigation customers would not be rationed. Instead, they would be required as a group to effect a 12-percent savings from 1987 water use.

The proposal would impose other restrictions on businesses, such as mandatory water-use surveys if use tops certain limits.

The third and final stage would continue residential water rationing and would limit all other customers to an amount based on 100 percent of their 1989 water use.

The ordinance also would create a drought appeal board, which would be composed of one member from business, the landscape industry, residential and an at-large member who resides outside the city limits but within the water service area.

Kocher told the council that the ordinance can be expected to affect only 45 percent of the water department's customers.

"Fifty-five percent of the customers will have to do no more than they did last year," he said. "Forty-five will have to do something, and 10 percent of those are going to be in big trouble."

He said letters are being sent to the heaviest users warning them that restrictions are coming.