

Public Drinking Water System Frequently Asked Questions

Question Type: General Public	
Question	Answer
When did the Governor declare the drought emergency?	January 17, 2014
What is the Drinking Water Program and what does it do?	The CDPH Drinking Water Program has 23 district offices and 32 Local Primacy Agencies (County Environmental Health jurisdictions) throughout the state that closely monitor the needs of drinking water systems. The program will continue to assess California's drinking water systems to identify and support those potentially at risk. The state's Drinking Water Program continues to provide technical support and assistance including tying in with neighboring systems that have a larger capacity, drilling new wells and/or expanding existing wells, adjusting surface water intake to reach additional supplies of water and hauling water.
What should I do if my water pressure becomes very low?	If you are experiencing water outages or low water pressure, immediately discontinue any non-essential water usage. This includes all outdoor irrigation and car washing. Minimizing usage will reduce the potential for the water system to lose pressure or completely run out of water. Please notify your water system and local health jurisdiction of the outage or low pressure.
How much water does one person need per day?	According to state Department of Water Resources, the average Californian uses 196 gallons a day for household purpose. The basic minimum that a person needs to cook, to drink water, to do their basic showering and sanitation needs is estimated to be 50 gallons per day.
What if water no longer comes out of the tap in my home?	Bottled water should be used for all drinking (including baby formula and juice), brushing teeth, washing dishes, making ice, food preparation and bathing until the return of normal water service and water appears clear and normal.
My water looks and/or smells funny – is it safe to drink or use?	If the water looks cloudy or dirty, you should not drink it. Upon return of normal water service, you should flush the hot and cold water lines until the water appears clear and the water quality returns to normal. If you are concerned about the water quality or are uncertain of its safety, you may add eight drops of household bleach to one gallon of water and let it sit for 30 minutes or alternatively, if you are able, water can be boiled for one minute at a rolling boil to ensure its safety. Use of home treatment devices does not guarantee the water supply is safe after low pressure situations. Bottled water should be used for all drinking (including baby formula and juice), brushing teeth, washing dishes, making ice, food preparation and bathing until the return of normal water service and water appears clear and normal.
What can I do if I am more sensitive to contaminants or more at risk to infections than the general population?	Seek advice from your health care provider.
I want to report someone for wasting water. Who do I report to?	It is best to call the local agency that provides water service in your area. Give as many specifics as possible, location, date and time the water wasting was occurring. The local water provider can follow-up and take appropriate actions.

How do I report illegal diversions of water from streams and waterways?	Report waste and unreasonable use of water as well as potential illegal diversions through the Cal/EPA complaint portal: http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/database/calepa_complaint/index.cfm
If there are concerns over water quality, who is responsible: local water district or the California Department of Public Health?	The water systems are responsible for providing an adequate and potable water supply to their customers. The oversight and regulatory jurisdiction (i.e., the California Department of Public Health or a county Local Primacy Agency (LPA)) depends on the location, type and size of the water system. CDPH regulates water systems that have 200 or more service connections while LPAs regulate water systems that have less than 200 service connections.
How do renters get water quality information about their drinking water?	A community water system must make a good faith effort to reach consumers who do not get water bills, such as renters or workers. An adequate good faith effort would include a mix of methods appropriate to the particular system such as: posting the reports on the Internet; mailing to postal patrons in metropolitan areas; advertising the availability of the report in the news media; publication in a local newspaper; posting in public places such as cafeterias or lunch rooms of public buildings; delivery of multiple copies for distribution by single-billed customers such as apartment buildings, nursing homes, schools or large private employers and community organizations.
Are water hauling companies required to tell the customer where they got the water?	No, water haulers are not required to identify the source of their water to customers; however, ensure water hauler is registered with CDPH A list of approved water hauler is available at http://www.sbcounty.gov/dph/dehs/Depts/EnvironmentalHealth/GeneralInformation/environmental_health_emergencies.aspx

Question Type: Public Drinking Water Systems	
Question	Answer
How many water systems are currently facing severe water shortages?	CDPH has identified 10 rural drinking water systems that are potentially at-risk of losing their capacity to deliver safe drinking water due to the drought conditions within 60 days. There are 40-50 other drinking water systems that CDPH is watching that potentially could run out of water within two to six months. Information about these systems is updated regularly and can be found on the CDPH website: http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/drinkingwater/Pages/DroughtImpact_PublicDrinkingWaterSystems.aspx
Will those systems run out of water and if so, how soon?	Some systems are at-risk of losing capacity within approximately 60-100 days. The other systems previously noted as at-risk have the potential to run out of water in the next 60-100 days if there is no rain and no other actions are taken. Many of these water systems have taken steps to improve their situation and are not immediately in danger of running out of water in the short term. These include: City of Healdsburg, City of Cloverdale, Shaver Lake Heights Mutual Water Company, Sierra Cedars Community Service District and Bass Lake Water Company.
Were any of the at-risk	A water system on the list could have previous water supply problems that preceded the current

communities already experiencing water supply problems preceding the drought?	drought and is now more severely impacted due to the drought. Water systems in low supply may haul water until a longer term solution is in place. The Department is working with water systems to find solutions including consolidating them into a larger, nearby public water system with adequate source capacity.
Where can I find information about the most critically impacted water systems?	The CDPH website, http://www.cdph.ca.gov and http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/drinkingwater/Pages/DroughtImpact_PublicDrinkingWaterSystems.aspx
How can I find out if my local water system is impacted or at risk?	Contact your water system or go to http://drinc.ca.gov/DWW/index.jsp
How were the at-risk water systems identified?	The list of at-risk systems was created as a point-in-time assessment of statewide conditions through CDPH staff surveying water systems. CDPH is in regular contact with all of the approximately 7,600 water systems it regulates, and that contact continues during this drought period. 3,015 Community Water Systems, 1,489 Non-transient non-community waters systems, 3,138 Transient non-community water systems for a total of 7,642.
Does the health department expect the list of water districts facing severe water shortages to increase in the coming weeks?	CDPH will be continuously evaluating drinking water systems to determine which are at-risk for drinking water shortages. Identified systems will likely change frequently, as solutions for these systems are implemented and additional vulnerable systems are identified. CDPH is in regular contact with all of the approximately 7,500 water systems it regulates, and that contact continues during this drought period. The water systems on the acutely impacted list may change as the drought conditions continue, or as solutions are implemented.
What is the threshold for being on the list? Is it completely dry, inadequate to provide normal usage?	Inadequate source capacity to provide normal usage.
What can CDPH do to help my PWS?	CDPH can assist in a number of ways, including but not limited to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide emergency funding for hauled water, interties, deepening wells, etc under Prop 84 – Section 75021, H&S Code Section 116475, or Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. • Review and approve use of stand-by sources or alternative sources not presently included in the PWS permit to operate. • Work with the PWS and approve public notifications if required to use un-permitted sources • Assist in notifying the media concerning the potential hazards and the safety of the water being supplied • Assist with testing of potential alternative sources • Coordinate and assist the LPA's in local approvals are required • Assist in discussions and negotiations with nearby PWS's who might be able to supply water

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access to lists of licensed water haulers http://www.cdph.ca.gov/pubsforms/Documents/fdbBVWCountyList.pdf • Provide information on conservation programs and measures • Assist in review of engineering alternatives and solutions • Assist in interfacing with OES, DWR, SWRCB and other PWSs that may be involved in securing alternative water supplies.
Is it true that most of the affected water districts are more susceptible to running out of water than urban districts because they have such a low number of paying customers that they can't afford to buy back-up water supplies or repair water equipment?	Small water systems are especially vulnerable to drought conditions. They have fewer customers, which can mean fewer options in terms of resources (funding and infrastructure). However, a public water system's size is not the only factor that may make them vulnerable to the effects of drought. Type of source and local conditions also play a significant role in system vulnerability.
Is the health department conferring with agencies including the Office of Emergency Services and the Federal Emergency Management agency to find solutions to water shortages in the affected communities? What could those solutions be?	CDPH will work with other state and federal agencies to provide additional resources. Potential solutions include, but are not limited to, conservation measures, interconnections with other water systems, development of new sources, and treatment of sources that produce water that do not produce water meeting drinking water quality standards. Other actions that can mitigate the impacts of the drought may also be available depending on the conditions that exist at specific water systems.
What is CDPH doing to alleviate these shortages?	CDPH continues to work with water systems to identify options and look for funding sources for potential solutions. CDPH also works with state and federal partners to identify additional resources. In addition, CDPH is surveying and conducting outreach with water systems to determine their status and needs, and identify possible solutions. CDPH's Drinking Water Program continues to provide technical support and assistance. The state will continue to assess California's drinking water systems to identify and support those potentially at risk.
Where are the drinking water source locations?	All drinking water source locations are kept confidential for security reasons.
What does a PWS need to do before activating a Standby Source? An Unpermitted Source?	It is always best to talk to your local District Office or County Environmental Health first. 1) Standby sources may be activated and used by a PWS subject to the following conditions. First the monitoring must be current. A standby source shall be used only for short-term emergencies of five consecutive days or less, and for less than a total of fifteen calendar days a year. Within 3 calendar days after the short-term emergency use of a standby source, the water supplier shall notify CDPH. The notification shall include information on the reason for and duration of the use. The status of a designated standby source can change, and time limitations can be extended, but approval must be obtained from CDPH in advance.

	<p>Unpermitted sources may not be used without the prior approval of CDPH. If an unpermitted source is to be used, CDPH may require monitoring for all inorganic, organic, and radiological Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCL) before approval. If an unapproved surface water source is used CDPH will require chlorination and issuance of a boil water notice to all customers. CDPH will also require the PWS to initiate mandatory water conservation measures. Requests to use unpermitted sources will be evaluated by the District Engineer on a case-by-case basis.</p>
<p>What kind of testing is recommended and required before using an alternative source?</p>	<p>For Standby Sources the following applies: (a) current monitoring for all inorganic, organic, and radiological MCLs, this includes monitoring for biological contamination. If a standby source has previous monitoring results indicating nitrate or nitrite levels equal to or greater than 50 percent of the MCL the PWS must collect and analyze a sample for nitrate and nitrite annually. In addition, upon activation of such a source, a sample shall be collected, analyzed for these chemicals and the analytical results reported to the Department within 24 hours of activation. A standby source for which perchlorate has been previously detected shall have a sample collected and analyzed for perchlorate annually. Additionally, upon activation of such a source, a sample shall be collected and analyzed for perchlorate, and the analytical result shall be reported to the Department within 48 hours of activation.</p>
<p>Would a public notice be required when using an unpermitted source?</p>	<p>Yes in most cases. Details of the notice should be worked out with the District Engineer or the LPA and the specific language will depend on the water quality test results.</p>

Question Type: Funding	
Question	Answer
<p>Have any of the at-risk water systems received aid from the state?</p>	<p>The CDPH Drinking Water Program approved emergency funding of \$250,000 to the city of Willits. This water system has been identified as vulnerable to losing its capacity to deliver safe drinking water due to drought conditions in California. The emergency funds will be specifically used to assist with the purchase and installation of pipe to transport well water to connect with the city's existing distribution system, a new well pump, fencing, disinfection of the well and well replacement. This will provide the people of Willits with at least a minimal supply of clean water to maintain emergency water supplies.</p> <p>During the week of February 17, 2014, the CDPH Proposition 84 Program executed an agreement with Lompico County Water District for \$115,000 in emergency grant funding. Lompico County Water District serves approximately 1,300 customers through 495 service connections in Santa Cruz County. It relies on three groundwater wells and one surface water source (Lompico Creek) for its domestic water supply, which is unable to meet system maximum day demand because of ongoing drought conditions. This water system was listed as one of the original 17 systems statewide at risk of running out of water within 60 to 120 days. To ensure an adequate and reliable supply of potable water is delivered to the customers of Lompico County</p>

	Water District, emergency grant funds are being used to install a temporary interconnection to neighboring San Lorenzo Valley Water District. This project is expected to be completed within three months.
Is funding assistance available from the State?	Yes. CDPH can provide emergency grant funding for hauled water, interties, deepening wells, etc., under Prop 84 – Section 75021, H&S Code Section 116475, or Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SDWSRF). The latter may take the form of either a loan or a grant depending upon whether the water system serves a disadvantaged community. Note: funding is only available to certain Public Water Systems.
Who is eligible to receive funding?	Funding from CDPH is limited to CWS (by definition 15 or more service connections) and certain Non-Transient Non-Community Water System (NTNCWS). The latter would include public schools. Grant funds can be awarded to any CWS (public, private or mutual water companies) and public schools. Private well owners, transient water systems and very small water systems with 5 to 14 service connections are not eligible for funding from CDPH.
How much funding is available?	Under Prop 84, CDPH District Engineers can award a verbal approval for up to \$10,000 grant; typically this is used for interim hauled water or bottled water. CDPH can also award up to \$250,000 with a grant funding agreement. CDPH may be able to provide more funds under the Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SDWSRF), however federal requirements related to Davis-Bacon Labor Compliance and Buy American could apply.
How does a PWS apply for funding assistance from CDPH?	The first step in obtaining funding assistance is to contact your local CDPH District Engineer or County Environmental Health http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/Documents/DDWEM/OriginalDistrictMapCDPH.pdf The local CDPH District Engineer will work with the PWS in preparing a preliminary engineering report that documents the emergency, the proposed solution and the estimated cost for the project. The proposed project will be reviewed for eligibility and if approved and funding is available the water system will be contacted for additional supplemental information.
Are there any other sources of emergency funding?	USDA, also working with CDPH and Office of Emergency Services may be able to provide assistance. See the following website for USDA funding information: http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/UWP-ecwag.htm and http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/SupportDocuments/CA-DroughtAssistance.pdf

Question Type: Recycled Water	
Question	Answer
Where can I find information on Recycled Water uses and requirements?	See CDPH website: http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/environhealth/water/Pages/Waterrecycling.aspx Also see information from the State Department of Water Resources at: http://www.water.ca.gov/recycling/index.cfm and the websites of the State Water Resources Control Board at:

	<p>Policy - http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/water_recycling_policy/</p> <p>Funding- http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/grants_loans/water_recycling/</p> <p>Permits - http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/water_recycling_policy/landscape_irrigation_general_permit.shtml</p>
Are there approvals from CDPH required to make use of recycled water as an alternative to potable	Currently, the only approved projects that use recycled water as a partial alternative potable water source are those that groundwater replenishment through surface spreading or direct injection. These are large projects that take multiple years to permit and construct.
Where can a PWS get information on graywater systems?	Graywater refers to wastewaters that come from laundering of cloths. Graywater systems are regulated by local government. While these would not be appropriate for human consumption, they can be used for watering plants. Contact San Bernardino County Land Use Services at 909-387-8311 for information.

Question Type: Contaminants	
Question	Answer
Is there a way to test my water myself?	You may test for turbidity and other constituents of concern with a handheld instrument. However, it is highly recommended that you contact a state certified laboratory for testing. A complete list of ELAP certified laboratories is available at http://www.cdph.ca.gov/certlic/labs/Pages/ELAP.aspx .

Question Type: Farm and Agriculture	
Question	Answer
Refer all questions to these links:	<p>The California Department of Food and Agriculture website: http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/drought/</p> <p>The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) – Rural Development website: http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/CA-Home.html</p> <p>http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/drought/docs/agconservationtips.pdf</p> <p>http://www.water.ca.gov/wateruseefficiency/agricultural/</p>

Question Type: Private Wells	
Question	Answer

<p>I own a private well that is going dry. Where can I get help?</p>	<p>The State does not regulate or control private wells nor are there any State Programs to address individual private well issues at this time. You may wish to contact your local county Environmental Health Department or additional information. The following link is to State licensed Water Haulers: http://www.sbcounty.gov/dph/dehs/Depts/EnvironmentalHealth/GeneralInformation/environmental_health_emergencies.aspx</p>
<p>Are private well owners eligible to receive funding?</p>	<p>Private well owners, transient water systems and very small water systems with 5 to 14 service connections are not eligible for funding from CDPH.</p>