

Press Release

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FPUD board rescinds Level 2 drought alert, returns to Level 1

FALLBROOK – Thanks to customers’ extraordinary conservation for more than a year, the Fallbrook Public Utility District board of directors voted at last night’s meeting to discontinue the Level 2 “drought alert” and return to a Level 1 “shortage watch.” Board director Keith Battle made the motion and the board vote was unanimous. The change became effective today.

The Level 2 alert included mandatory restrictions, and required all residential and commercial customers to cut back water use by 8 percent. Those restrictions included following an outdoor watering schedule, limiting landscape irrigation to three days per week and ten minutes per sprinkler station.

Those restrictions are no longer in place with the return to Level 1.

Returning to Level 1 does not mean that future water challenges are over, but rather that FPUD’s anticipated supplies for the next year are adequate to meet demands. That situation could change if the region’s water supply outlook worsens or if FPUD customers stop conserving the way they have been.

Farmers who voluntarily entered into discount water programs still have individual allocations in place.

FPUD customers met and exceeded the district’s call for an 8 percent reduction in 2009. Water use has been down about 15 percent since FPUD began asking for conservation.

FPUD had moved up to Level 2 in April 2009, after the district’s wholesaler, the San Diego County Water Authority, declared a Level 2 alert. The Authority then cut supplies to its member agencies, including FPUD, by 8 percent. To meet that 8 percent reduction and avoid penalties from the Authority, FPUD implemented Level 2 mandatory restrictions and asked its customers to cut back by 8 percent.

With a Level 1, conservation is technically voluntary but basic restrictions are expected.

“Level 1 restrictions are common-sense, everyday things we should all be doing anyway,” said General Manager Keith Lewinger.

They are:

1. Do not wash down paved surfaces, including sidewalks, driveways, parking lots, tennis courts or patios, except when necessary for safety or sanitation hazards.
2. Eliminate water waste from inefficient irrigation, such as runoff or overspray. Similarly, stop water flows onto non-targeted properties such as roadways.
3. Irrigate residential and commercial landscape only before 10 a.m. and after 6 p.m..
4. Use a hand-held hose equipped with a shut-off nozzle or bucket to water landscaped areas, including trees and shrubs on residential and commercial properties that are not irrigated by a landscape irrigation system.
5. Irrigate nursery and commercial growers’ products before 10 a.m. and after 6 p.m. only. Watering is permitted at any time with a hand-held hose with a shut-off nozzle or a bucket. Irrigation of nursery propagation beds and watering of livestock is permitted at any time.
6. Ornamental fountains may only be operated if they re-circulate their water.
7. Wash vehicles using a bucket and hand-held hose with a shut-off nozzle or high-pressure, low-volume wash system, or at a commercial site that re-circulates its water on site. Avoid washing during hot conditions due to excessive evaporation.
8. Restaurants should only serve and refill water to customers upon request.
9. Hotels and motels should offer guests the option of not laundering towels and linens daily.
10. Repair all leaks with five days of notification by FPUD, unless other arrangements are made with the general manager.
11. Use recycled or non-potable water for construction purposes when available.

Challenges still remain for Southern California’s water supply. The region has had above-average rainfall this year and statewide snowpack has also been well above average, allowing reservoirs throughout the state to begin refilling; however, after four consecutive dry years, it would only take one more dry year to potentially put California back in the red.

Additionally, water restrictions designed to protect fish in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta remain in effect, strictly limiting the amount of water that can be exported from the delta to Southern California. Therefore, the continuing efficient use of water throughout California remains necessary to avoid reinstate cutbacks.