

## **DROUGHT EMERGENCY**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

Drought emergency areas are proclaimed by the Governor upon consideration of: surface water, groundwater, precipitation, and soil moisture indicators; the status of public water supplies; recommendations of the Commonwealth Drought Task Force; and input from county officials within affected counties.

This information is a guideline for commonly asked questions concerning the ban on nonessential water uses during drought emergencies. These answers do not take into consideration special circumstances and are not a legal substitute for the actual regulations. For more information, consult the regulations at 4 Pa. Code Chapter 119 found on the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) website [www.dep.pa.gov/Drought](http://www.dep.pa.gov/Drought).

#### **Golf Courses**

- **Can golf courses be watered?**

Tees, greens, and fairways may be watered between the hours of 5:00 PM and 10:00 AM in accordance with a drought operating plan approved by the Commonwealth Drought Coordinator. The plan must be submitted using the [Drought Emergency Application \(DEA\)](#). These plans limit watering to 70 percent of normal monthly quantities, based on metered monthly values for the previous five years. Heat-sensitive grasses on tees, greens, and fairways may be syringed for a maximum of 15 minutes, between the hours of 10:00 AM and 5:00 PM, by means of a hand-held hose equipped with an automatic shutoff nozzle. The activity should be posted at the clubhouse and on the course so that the public is made aware that the syringing is permitted.

- **What are heat-sensitive grasses?**

Typically, *Poa Annua* and *Bentgrass*.

- **What is syringing?**

Syringing is a short watering of 15 minutes or less during the heat of the day to cool and moisten grasses to keep them from dying, but not to prevent dormancy.

#### **Pools**

- **Can swimming pools be filled or topped off?**

No, with the following exceptions: 1) public swimming pools and residential swimming pools serving 25 or more dwelling units, if the pools have filtration equipment allowing for continued use and recycling of water; 2) swimming pools operated by health care facilities used in relation to patient care and rehabilitation; 3) other pools only if approved by the public water supply agency from which the water is withdrawn. If water is obtained from other sources, permission from the owner of the source is required.

- **Can kiddie pools be filled?**

Kiddie pools that are just filled and emptied and that have no recirculation equipment may be filled. When emptying kiddie pools, the water should be reused for watering bushes, shrubs, or garden areas.

#### **Miscellaneous**

- **Can high school and college football fields be watered?**

Yes. Non-sand-based athletic fields may be watered between the hours of 5:00 PM and 9:00 AM, one night per calendar week, in accordance with a schedule submitted in advance to the Commonwealth Drought Coordinator, the local law enforcement agency and, if applicable, the public water supply agency from which the water is drawn. Sand-based athletic fields may be watered in accordance with a plan approved by the Commonwealth Drought Coordinator. The plan must be submitted using the [DEA](#).

- **Is dust control on dirt tracks and the dirt portions of baseball infields allowed?**

Dust control on athletic fields is prohibited, unless necessary to protect health and safety. On dirt racetracks, health and safety is clearly an issue and dust control will be allowed. On baseball fields, health and safety is not an issue and dust control is not allowed.

- **Is dust control on construction sites allowed?**

Yes. Generally, dust control is not banned in the Chapter 119 regulations; however, it should only be done at the minimum rate necessary.

- **Can fountains and waterfalls for fish ponds be operated to aerate the water and keep fish alive?**

Yes, fountains and waterfalls may be operated to aerate fish ponds and keep aquatic life alive. Operation of fountains and waterfalls is prohibited if used only for ornamental purposes.

- **Can water be used for firefighter training?**

Water from a fire hydrant may not be used for this purpose. Water from tanker trucks may be used for this purpose; however, if the tanker trucks are filled from fire hydrants, then approval must first be obtained from the public water supply agency.

- **Can livestock be watered and groomed in preparation for showing at fairs?**

Yes.

- **Can vegetable/flower gardens be watered if the produce is sold to the general public?**

Vegetable gardens, regardless of size or ownership, are used for production of food, and irrigation for the production of food is allowed. Commercial flower gardens, operated to produce stock for sale to the public, are considered nurseries, and nurseries are allowed to irrigate. However, irrigation should be done at the minimum rate necessary for plant growth. Watering should be done after 5:00 PM and before 9:00 AM to the maximum extent possible.

- **Can lawns be watered from a private water well that is not part of a public water supply agency?**

No. The nonessential use restrictions prohibit the use of any water, regardless of source, for this purpose.

- **Can water be used to drive pesticides into the ground for grub control?**

Yes, but only one-time during the effective period of the Governor's emergency proclamation.

- **Can water be used to wash sidewalks and patios at eating places?**

In general, sidewalks and patios should be swept for cleaning. However, if there is material that requires water for removal, then washing for sanitary purposes is allowed on the premises of food vending establishments.

- **Can a well be pumped to fill a pond?**

Yes, but only to the minimum extent necessary to maintain fish and aquatic life that may exist in the pond. The Chapter 119 regulations apply to pond water and well water.

*Note: Individual public water supply agencies or political subdivisions may apply stricter regulations based on current local conditions.*

**For more information, contact:**

**Office of Water Resources Planning**

Planning and Conservation Division

P.O. Box 8555

Harrisburg, PA 17105-8555

Telephone: 717-772-4048

E-mail: [droughtinfo@pa.gov](mailto:droughtinfo@pa.gov)

For more information, visit [www.dep.pa.gov/Drought](http://www.dep.pa.gov/Drought).