

DROUGHT EMERGENCY RESTRICTIONS

Commercial Pressure Washing and Cleaning Businesses and Mobile Washing Operations

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.

The regulations in 4 Pa. Code Chapter 119 describe nonessential water uses that are prohibited during drought emergencies. Most, but not all, commercial pressure washing and cleaning business activities are exempt from these prohibitions. However, commercial mobile pressure washing businesses must operate by using water at the minimum rate necessary for each specific job, as in the examples described below:

- As a general principle, all vertical surfaces may be pressure washed, taking care not to use excessive amounts of water.
- All paved horizontal surfaces like sidewalks, patios, driveways, or street and parking areas are prohibited from being washed, except in preparation for recoating or sealing. These surfaces may be dry swept or blown clean with leaf blowers. Premises of raw or processed food, pharmaceutical or vaccine processing, storage, or vending establishments including restaurants and grocery stores may be washed to the extent necessary for sanitation purposes.
- Water may be used by professional mobile-wash businesses at the minimum rate necessary for the washing of vehicles.
- Street and parking lot sweepers may use water for dust suppression only, since dust suppression is an essential water use for control of particulate matter.
- To ensure the health and safety of the general public, water may be used for cleaning and sanitizing mobile equipment used for hauling or vending raw or processed food, or pharmaceuticals or vaccines, or for handling waste products.
- Water may be used for cleaning of commercial, construction, emergency, public transportation or government vehicles if necessary to preserve the proper functioning and safe operation of the vehicle. This generally relates to windows, mirrors, and lights.

Chapter 119 regulations provide specific restrictions relative to water use by dealers of new or used cars in washing of vehicles.

If a community or water supplier is experiencing severe shortages or is implementing water rationing with the approval of the Commonwealth Drought Coordinator, local restrictions may be more stringent than state regulations. In such instances, local restrictions will supersede state rules.

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For more information, visit www.dep.pa.gov/Drought.