

Frequently Asked Questions

provided by South Florida Water Management District

How are these restrictions different from previous water restrictions?

Residents can choose to water in the morning or in the evening on their designated irrigation day for a total of four hours. Previous restrictions allowed a total of eight irrigation hours a week divided over two days.

Is anyone automatically exempted from these restrictions?

Yes. Because 100 percent of the water used by the Town of Highland Beach in Palm Beach County is drawn from the Floridian Aquifer, these customers are exempt from current restrictions.

Do these restrictions apply to South Florida residents using 100 percent reuse or reclaimed water for irrigation?

No, but conservation of all water resources is encouraged. Water reclaimed from waste water sewage treatment plants is not meant for drinking and is used almost exclusively for irrigation. It is usually transferred through purple pipes.

How does restricting landscape irrigation help address the water shortage?

Landscape irrigation accounts for up to half of all household water consumption in Florida. It is critical for everyone's health and safety that enough water be available for public use throughout Florida's extended dry season. From November through May, water demands increase as the cooler, dry weather attracts winter visitors and announces the arrival of brush fire season. Restricting the days and times that water is used for irrigation will reduce the demand on one of our most precious natural resources.

Why wasn't the weekend selected for lawn irrigation?

Because a heavy demand for water is expected on irrigation days, some water utilities could face service strains if irrigation was allowed on back-to-back days.

When can I water my newly planted landscaping and sod?

For residents of Broward, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Lee, Martin, Okeechobee, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Palm Beach and St. Lucie counties, except residents of the Town of Highland Beach, new plantings, sod or landscaping in place for 30 days or less can be watered:

- From 2 a.m. to 8 a.m., Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays, on properties less than five acres in size.

Irrigation is not permitted on Fridays.

- From 12:01 a.m. to 8 a.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays on properties more than five acres in size. Irrigation is not permitted on Fridays.

New plantings, sod or landscaping in place for 31 to 60 days can be watered:

- From 2 a.m. to 8 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, on properties less than five acres in size.

- From 12:01 a.m. to 8 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, on properties more than five acres in size. These rules permit new landscape watering only. Homeowners should keep documentation on any new landscaping, such as a dated receipt of purchase, in case they are required to provide proof of the installation date.

Can I water the lawn after applying fertilizer or pesticide?

Yes. You may water-in fertilizer or pesticide for 10 minutes after application. This work can be done any day of the week as long as a homeowner or technician is present during application.

I water my lawn from a well, canal, pond or surface lake. Do these restrictions apply to me?

Yes. Surface and groundwater sources are connected. Water in lakes and canals helps to protect private and public wells from saltwater intrusion, and helps store rainfall to recharge wells and aquifers.

Can I hand-water my lawn?

Yes. You can hand water stressed plants for 10 minutes per day using a single hose with an attached automatic shut off nozzle.

What other low-volume watering methods are allowed?

Drip, bubble and micro-jet systems that apply water directly to root plant zones may be used any time. However, a voluntary reduction in use is encouraged and any low-volume system should not produce water runoff. Watering cans are also low-volume and can be used anytime.

When can I wash my car or boat?

Anytime. Vehicle washing is not restricted. When washing a car, park it over a non-paved or porous surface to limit water runoff, and always attach an automatic shut-off nozzle to your hose. Limit boat rinsing to 15 minutes after it has been in salt water.

My organization is scheduling a fundraising car wash. Do we need to apply for a variance?

No. There are no restrictions on vehicle washing. Always attach automatic shutoff nozzles to hoses and, if possible, channel runoff water to a grassy area or porous surface.

When can I use a pressure washer?

Anytime. Pressure washing is not restricted. Use low-volume equipment that produces water pressure of 1,000 pounds per square inch to 4,000 pounds per square inch. Channel runoff water onto the grass or another non-paved surface.

Is there a way that I can get permission to change my watering day or times?

Yes. You may apply for a variance from water restrictions. The application form is online at: [Variance Application](#), and the instruction form is online at: [Variance Instructions](#). Your application will be reviewed by South Florida Water Management District staff, and approval or denial is based on criteria listed in the [Water Shortage Plan Rule](#). For more information, visit www.sfwmd.gov or call (800) 432-2045.

What happens if I don't follow these restrictions?

Residential and commercial water restrictions are mandatory and will be enforced by local government through law enforcement or zoning and code enforcement agencies. Residential fines vary by municipality, but typically range from \$25 to \$125 for a first offense.

How can I report violations of water restrictions?

You may report violations to law enforcement or zoning and code enforcement agencies. Both have the authority to issue warnings and citations that can lead to fines. See the [List of County and City Enforcement Contacts](#). If you choose to notify your local law enforcement agency, please call their non-emergency number.

For other users:

South Florida Water Management District permitted water users, such as homeowners associations, golf courses and large commercial users are required to achieve a 45 percent reduction in their overall water consumption.

What are the restrictions for golf courses?

Golf courses must reduce their allocated water use by 45 percent, but are not restricted to watering at certain days or times. Where possible, golf courses should limit watering to early mornings or evenings to reduce water loss through evaporation. Permit holders must report their weekly water usage at <https://my.sfwmd.gov/watershortage>

Does the 45 percent water use reduction rule apply to all golf courses within the South Florida Water Management District boundaries, even if the county where the course is located is divided by another water management district?

Yes. Although some residential users in divided counties are following restrictions established by neighboring water management districts, the 45 percent water use reduction rule applies to any golf course with a South Florida Water Management District permit. This includes courses in Broward, Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Highlands, Lee, Miami-Dade, Martin, Monroe, Okeechobee, Orange, Osceola, Palm Beach, Polk and St. Lucie counties.

What are the restrictions for agriculture?

Agricultural water users may not use overhead irrigation from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., unless it is for stress reduction of field grown citrus nursery stock. Such stress reduction watering is allowed daily for 10 minutes per irrigation zone from 11:30 a.m. to 12 p.m., and from 1:30 p.m. to 2 p.m.

Water withdrawals from the C-23, C-24 and C-25 canals will stop in the Upper East Coast if those canals drop to 14 feet above sea level.

What are the restrictions for plant nurseries?

Nursery owners may operate overhead irrigation systems seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. for inside or shaded plants, and from 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. for outside plants. Stress reduction watering is permitted from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. for 10 minutes per irrigation zone.

No irrigation is allowed on days with sufficient rainfall. Users shall install a rainfall cut-off switch or similar measuring device to determine when there has been enough rain to stop irrigation.

Are plant nurseries within the South Florida Water Management District boundaries required to follow these restrictions if they are located in a county divided by another water management district?

Yes. Although some residential water users in divided counties are following restrictions established by neighboring water management districts, all plant nurseries within the South Florida Water Management District must follow these restrictions.

Is hand-watering allowed for golf courses, agriculture, livestock and plant nurseries?

Yes, but it should be voluntarily reduced.

What are the restrictions for tennis courts, sports turf and other athletic facilities?

To maintain safe playing field conditions, sports turf can be watered for 20 minutes anytime between 11 p.m. on the preceding day to 7 a.m. on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. For example: watering can occur between 11:30 p.m. and 11:50 p.m. on Monday night, or from 6 a.m. to 6:20 a.m. on Tuesday morning.

Infields can be watered twice daily, once before 9 a.m. and once after 4 p.m. for up to 10 minutes.

No irrigation is allowed if there has been sufficient rainfall prior to scheduled irrigation. Users shall install a rainfall cut-off switch or similar measuring device to determine when there has been enough rain to stop irrigation.

Sprigged or seeded turf areas can be watered for 10 minutes per zone from 11:30 a.m. to 12 p.m., 1:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. to 4 p.m., for the first sixty days after planting.

Clay or Har-Tru tennis courts may be watered for up to 10 minutes daily at 10 a.m. **AND** 10 p.m.

Surrounding facilities and landscaping must be irrigated according to standard water restrictions.

Other related questions:

What is saltwater intrusion and how is it related to water restrictions?

Saltwater intrusion happens when saltwater from the sea flows beneath the land surface into freshwater aquifers. It is a natural process that occurs in most coastal areas, but one that can contaminate water used for drinking. Water restrictions help to ensure that there is enough freshwater remaining in the system to prevent the inland flow of salt water. A graphic showing saltwater intrusion is online at: [Saltwater Intrusion Management](#).

If we're in a water shortage, why is the South Florida Water Management District releasing freshwater from coastal canals into the sea?

The South Florida Water Management District is storing as much water as possible, but there are limits in a system that was designed for flood control. Many communities, particularly east of I-95, quickly flood following sudden rainfall. Even if it doesn't look as if your neighborhood is in danger of flooding, communities upstream or downstream may need flood relief that can only happen if water levels in canals are low enough to accommodate runoff. The South Florida Water Management District is always exploring options to reduce the amount of water released to tide, but this is a normal part of critical flood control efforts. For details about how the flood control system works, read [Know the Flow](#).

Don't pond fountains and decorative fountains waste water? Should they be turned off during the water shortage?

Communities, businesses and homeowners are not prohibited from running their decorative fountains, but these features should be in good repair, re-circulate water and not spray water outside of the basin. Pond fountains are often needed to promote oxygen circulation in the water.

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