

# DWP WATER RATE INFORMATION

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Greig Smith Council District 12



## LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCILMAN GREIG SMITH

We have consistently worked for more transparency and accountability from the DWP. We authored legislation in 2005 that now mandates an independent analysis for any power rate increases.

More recently, we introduced a motion in February that would offer homeowners and businesses rebates for installing devices that automatically adjust sprinkler watering levels based on weather conditions to help residents save water. The devices would also be required at all City-owned properties.

We are always working to find ways to make DWP more efficient and to keep down unnecessary rate increases.

Currently, however, we are experiencing a significant water shortage, and we simply must do more to conserve.

The Los Angeles region is suffering a serious drought plus significant water supply shortages. The Eastern Sierra snowpack, which supplies 35% of the City's water, is at its lowest levels in years. The City's water supplies from the Metropolitan Water District (MWD) have also been reduced by 10% due to lower water levels in the Colorado River Aqueduct and environmental restoration projects in Northern California. The City receives 60% of its water from MWD.

To address the water crisis, the Board of Water and Power Commissioners has approved a proposal to limit lawn watering to twice a week, because approximately 40% of water use in L.A. is for irrigation of lawns and gardens.

In early April, the DWP Board reported that higher water-shortage rates needed to be implemented. After much deliberation and a detailed examination of the shortage rate system and the water shortage situation, we passed the shortage rates in order to encourage conservation.

Under the DWP's tiered billing system, about 85% of single family homes, and 99% of apartment buildings in the 12th District fall into the lowest water usage tier, so they will see no increase in their bill. For the remaining 15% the remaining options are to conserve more, or see rates increase.

Single-family households are allocated a certain amount of water at the lowest rate – Tier 1. This allotment is determined by three things: lot size, location and number of household members. The higher rate is for every additional gallon of water used in a billing period that is above that amount. **This means that you will not be penalized if you have already been conserving water, because the Tier is not set based on your own use.**

DWP estimates that the proposed rate could increase the monthly charge for an average HIGH water user by an average of \$5 and DECREASE the monthly charge of customers who conserve by an average of \$12.

We are also requiring water conservation at City facilities - City Departments as a whole have been able to conserve 9.8%. Through LADWP grants, Recreation and Parks Department has been able to install 155 smart controllers at 67 parks, saving over 20% of their normal water usage. In addition, 5 of the 14 City golf courses use recycled water (which is not under any prohibited use restrictions, and is not drinking water), that represents 53% of total golf acreage.

To find out what your usage tiers are, call the DWP's hotline at (800) Dial DWP, or email [waterconservationteam@ladwp.com](mailto:waterconservationteam@ladwp.com). Starting May 1, 2009, the DWP website [www.LADWP.com](http://www.LADWP.com) will have a special feature on their website that allows residents to look up their usage tiers and rates by entering their address, to determine if they are currently below or above the rate increase proposal.

**How to conserve:**

To help residents conserve water and keep their bills low, LADWP has a customer rebate program that provides incentives for water conservation including the planting of drought resistance landscaping and the purchase of smart sprinkler controllers. The [www.LADWP.com](http://www.LADWP.com) website has a large amount of information on how to conserve water.

Now it is more important than ever to conserve, not just to preserve precious water resources, but to save residents money in these hard economic times.

Also, please see this informative article recently published in the Los Angeles Times.

**Q & A – HOW WATER CONSERVATION MEASURES IN L.A. WILL WORK**  
**Los Angeles Times**

Drought prompts the city to limit automatic sprinkling, as well as adopt higher rates for exceeding a usage reduction of 15%. DWP officials discuss the new rules, which will take effect June 1.

The Los Angeles City Council on Tuesday approved new water conservation measures that will restrict the use of lawn sprinkler systems to Mondays and Thursdays for all Department of Water and Power customers. We asked DWP officials how the new rules will work.

**Q: Does this mean I can only water my garden on Mondays and Thursdays?**

**A:** No. Only automatic sprinkler systems are restricted. Hand watering using garden hoses fitted with shut-off nozzle devices is allowed any day but not between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. The DWP has found that people who water their lawns by hand tend to be more careful about how much water they use. But when a sprinkler system is left unattended, the lawn is more likely to become over-saturated and the excess water runs off into the drainage system.

**Q: Why does everybody have to use their sprinkler systems on the same day?**

**A:** This makes it easier to enforce.

**Q: How will the rules be enforced?**

**A:** DWP has a water conservation team whose members drive through neighborhoods in Los Angeles checking for water waste. If your sprinkler is running on a Wednesday, they can cite you for violating the conservation measures. For a first citation, you will receive a warning. Subsequent citations are subject to a fine, which starts at \$100 but can run up to \$600. You can help by notifying investigators of potential violations. Call (800) 342-5397 or e-mail [waterconservationteam@ladwp.com](mailto:waterconservationteam@ladwp.com).

**Q: When do the rules go into effect?**

**A:** June 1.

**Q: Is this the only change?**

**A:** No, the DWP has announced a new rate structure to encourage conservation. It also goes into effect June 1.

**Q: How will the new water rates work?**

**A:** Under the current system, single-family households are allocated a certain amount of water at the cheapest billing rate. This is known as your Tier 1 allotment and is determined by three measures: lot size, location and number of household members. A premium rate is charged for every additional gallon used in a billing cycle.

Under the new system, the Tier 1 allotment will be reduced by 15%. Say you currently get 1,000 gallons; your new Tier 1 allotment will be 850. When your water usage hits 851 gallons in a billing cycle, the premium rates kick in.

If you do not exceed your reduced allocation, the DWP says your bills will actually decrease. But if you have to pay Tier 2 rates, you will see your water bills increase dramatically.

**Q: So how do I find out my new Tier 1 allotment?**

**A:** After May 1, you can go to the DWP website, enter your customer number and address, and you will be given your Tier 1 allotment.

**Q: How do I reduce my water consumption by 15%?**

**A:** DWP anticipates that most people who cut their outdoor watering to two days a week will realize that 15% savings.

**Q: How long will the new rates be in effect?**

**A:** Shortage-year rates are likely to be in effect for at least one year. During late winter and early spring 2010, the DWP will have a better idea of how this year's snowpack and rainfall levels will affect the water supply.

**Q: Are we likely to see more water restrictions?**

**A:** If everybody abides by the new rules, the DWP does not anticipate any further restrictions. But if conservation goals are not met, the agency could ask the City Council to restrict sprinkler usage to one day a week and then to ban it altogether.