



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Public Utilities Department

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Investigating Reported Water Waste By Luis Generoso, Water Resources Manager, City of San Diego

SAN DIEGO – - With the Mayor and City Council’s declaration of a Level 2 Water Emergency, mandatory water use restrictions have been in effect since June 1st. The Water Conservation Program has a new team of conservation heroes, their water waste investigators. These investigators are reaching out to San Diegans about the mandatory water use restrictions and how to use water wisely.

“As the water supply crisis continues to persist, we all must do our part to use water efficiently and help one another to prevent water waste. The drought conditions are serious and we have no time to waste and no water to waste,” said Ray Roberson, Water Waste Analyst. “The City of San Diego Water Department gets numerous calls about water waste every day and we are working hard to investigate and address all these concerns.”

Here’s a brief Q & A with Water Waste Analyst Ray Roberson about the City’s water waste investigation efforts:

How many investigators are there in the Public Utilities Department?

The Public Utilities Department has 5 full-time water waste investigators.

What kind of training does a water waste investigator go through?

Each investigator must go through a training that involves learning about the current mandatory water use restrictions, San Diego Municipal Code, different irrigation systems, and the process for conducting water waste investigations.

What are the sources of water waste investigations?

Most water waste complaints come through the Public Utilities Department via an email to waterwaste@sandiego.gov or via the water waste hotline at (619) 515-3500. We sometimes receive doorhangers from City employees and the public about water waste they observed. Also, if a water waste investigator notices water waste on the field, they will address the issue as well.

What is the volume of investigations thus far?

A total of 691 water waste complaints were received in June. Through July 13th, there have been 330 investigations opened. Before the water emergency started, the Water Conservation Program conducted an average of 80 investigations per month.

What types of water waste is usually reported?

Types of water waste reported include: excessive irrigation, watering on the wrong day or time, water runoff, leak reported, washing paved areas, broken sprinklers, or running ornamental fountains.

What is the process for addressing water waste concerns?

A typical process for addressing water waste concerns include these steps:

- A call or email about water waste is received.
- An investigation form is filled out to describe the reporting party (if not anonymous), the description of the water waste, and a location. Sometimes an onsite field investigation must be done to obtain all the details of the reported water waste.
- Based on the location description, the property owner, property manager, or tenant is contacted.
- The initial contact is made through an advisory letter to the property owner, property manager, or tenant stating that a water waste complaint for the property was observed and that they have 10 days to make sure they are in compliance with the mandatory water use restrictions. If the violation is a persistent leak, repairs must be made within 72 hours per the San Diego Municipal Code 67.3806 (b)(4). Additionally, a flyer with the mandatory water use restrictions also accompanies this courtesy notice.
- If additional calls come in for the same location after the 10 days and there appears to be no resolution, a field investigation occurs and the property owner, property manager, or tenant are notified again of the water use restrictions.

What happens when a water waste problem is not remedied within the allotted timeframe and the problem is continually reported in the same location?

If water waste problems are not remedied within the allotted timeframe and remain consistent in a particular location, the property owner, property manager, or tenant receives a warning and is notified that the claim will be forwarded to the City's code compliance office where enforcement and fines are handled.

What are the challenges in investigating water waste calls?

Out in the field, a couple of the biggest challenges are identifying a source of the water waste and locating the alleged water waste. The more specific the location is on an investigation form and the more detailed the description is for the observed water waste, the easier it is to track and record.

Where can one go to get more information about the mandatory water use restrictions?

Visit the City's Public Utilities Department webpage at <http://www.sandiego.gov/wateremergency>.

The Water Conservation Program reduces water demand through promoting or providing incentives for the installation of hardware that provides permanent water savings, and by providing services and information to help San Diegans make better decisions about water use. For more information about Water Conservation, visit <http://www.sandiego.gov/water/conservation> or call (619) 515-3500.

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