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Water rations: Residents face mandatory restrictions June 1

By **KRYSTAL DE LOS SANTOS McKinney Courier-Gazette**

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Signs throughout the city have been proclaiming the grim fact of the region's water woes for nearly a month now: Stage 3 coming soon.

The City of McKinney and much of North Central Texas on June 1 will enter a North Texas Municipal Water District Stage 3 drought, graduating from Stage 2. Stage 3, unlike the voluntary limitations of Stage 2, makes water restrictions mandatory and allows officials to issue citations and enforce policies designed to reduce the city's water use.

NTMWD has established a goal to reduce daily water usage by 5 percent in Stage 3, in addition to the 2 percent reduction in Stage 2, from January daily water usage level of 19 million gallons. The Stage 3 target is 17.69 million gallons per day, and must be sustained throughout Stage 3 of the drought. City staff has reported that the city must reduce its water consumption by 50 percent during the hot summer months.

To do that, the city so far has implemented a public awareness campaign, Water IQ, and is weighing a drought surcharge on water rates for high volume residential users and commercial irrigation users. The surcharge may be adopted at the May 22 council meeting.

"We've asked people to conserve," said Director of Public Works Hal Cranor. "We've seen some results, but obviously not enough to make much of an impact. People think, 'well, it rained yesterday so the drought must be over,' but that's not the case."

Though the area has seen some rain in the past few days, the water level at Lake Lavon, McKinney's water source, is still very low.

"The biggest thing people can do is cut back on irrigation, and cut back on using water outside," Cranor said.

Also, he said, residents should find out how much water their lawn really needs. Most lawns need only one inch per week to stay healthy. To find out how long to run their sprinklers, he said, residents can purchase a rain gauge or, place an empty tuna can in the middle of their lawn while the sprinklers are running and monitor it to see how long it takes to fill the can about one inch deep.

The city's Stage 3 plans include allowing lawn irrigation only on trash days, between midnight and 10 a.m. or 6 p.m. to midnight.

City staff is proposing to make the following activities prohibited as Frisco and Allen have done:

- n Hosing of paved areas, buildings, or windows

- n Operation of ornamental fountains (this does not apply to fountains in lakes that do not use treated water and are needed to prevent stagnation that can lead to increased mosquito

populations)

n Washing and rinsing of vehicles by hose (car washes may still remain open)

n Using water in such a manner as to allow runoff or waste

Staff is also proposing voluntary limitations on the installation of new landscaping, except for erosion control and landscaping required by ordinance. Citations will be issued for those who are found violating the ordinance. Violators face a fine of up to \$2,000 if convicted. The "window" fine for those who simply pay is \$402.00 for the first offense during Stage 3. The City will also turn off the irrigation meter at the time the offense is discovered.

"This is going to go on I would think through the summer and maybe even into the fall," Cranor said. "It's going to get worse before it gets better, and if it continues to get worse, it could go into next year and then really affect the things we do on a daily basis. We don't want to have to start rationing water."

Stage 4 requires an additional 10 percent reduction in the city's water use. At that point, generally no irrigation would be allowed.

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