



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
OFFICE OF DRINKING WATER

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## Drought Preparedness

The reliable, on-going delivery of safe drinking water is a key public health issue that is challenged during drought. On July 24, 2023, Governor Inslee declared a drought emergency for 12 basins across the state. A drought advisory remains in effect for the entire state.

Some water sources are more vulnerable to water shortages. Surface waters, springs, and shallow wells (less than 100 feet deep) are all heavily reliant on runoff from snow and recent rainfall for recharge. The Office of Drinking Water would like to take this opportunity to remind you of the steps you can take to mitigate potential water shortages. These include:

1. **Start checking the water level of your water source.** This is the single best activity you can engage in to determine the adequacy of your supply. Weekly checks of the water level in your well or other water source helps you identify declines and provide more time to react and plan. Help on measuring water levels may be obtained from your local pump technician or a large neighboring utility. Refer to [Measuring Water Levels in Wells 331-428 \(PDF\)](#).
2. **Find leaks and repair them.** Leaky water pipes waste precious water. Help from qualified professionals on leak detection and repair is available through [Evergreen Rural Water of Washington](#) or a professional leak detection company.
3. **Educate your customers about water conservation.** This is the time to stress the importance of wise use of water. Depending upon your area you may want to consider curbing outdoor water use. The [Home-Water-Works website](#) lists water conservation ideas for homeowners, among many other sources on the web.
4. **Prepare an emergency response plan.** Thinking ahead and developing a plan can help tremendously when problems arise. You need to assess if the system might have a water shortage problem, promote water conservation among system users and develop a plan for alternative water sources in the event of an emergency. Our [Water Shortage Response Plans webpage](#) helps you prepare a water shortage plan, which may help you qualify for drought-related financial assistance programs if needed.

- 5. Look for alternate sources of water for use during an emergency.** Now is the time to develop a relationship with a neighboring water system. Work together for mutually beneficial solutions to a water shortage or get an emergency water source ready and approved for use. If you have not done so already, this may be an appropriate time to join [WAWARN](#). This network allows water and wastewater systems to receive rapid mutual aid and assistance from other systems in times of an emergency.

If your water system is located within the geographic boundary of the [drought declaration](#), you may be eligible for drought response funding. Look on the Department of Ecology's [Drought response grants webpage](#).

We believe that proactive steps now can help prevent water shortages or outage emergencies in the future. If we can assist you in these efforts, please contact your [ODW regional engineer or planner](#).