

Level 1 Drought Response Declaration

After closely monitoring climatic indicators and drought conditions in Georgia for months, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) declared a state-wide Drought Response Level 1 for public water systems using surface water and/or groundwater on April 27, 2026.

What does this mean for our customers?

Under a Drought Response Level 1, general landscape watering may be done between 4pm and 10 am each day, and the following activities may be done at any time of day:

- Irrigation of personal food gardens may be done at any time of day;
- Irrigation of new and replanted plant, seed, or turf may be done at any time of day for 30 days after installation;
- Drip irrigation or irrigation using soaker hoses may be done at any time of day; and
- Hand-watering with a hose with automatic cutoff or handheld container may be done at any time of day.

How bad are the drought conditions in Union County?

GA EPD uses multiple tools in its arsenal to monitor drought conditions in Georgia, including the U.S. Drought Monitor, issued weekly by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The April 2026 report indicates a precipitation deficit of over 15 inches in North Georgia over the past 6 months, putting our county into a D3 Drought Classification (Extreme Drought). As temperatures are predicted to be higher than normal for this summer, this may impact public water systems' water supply throughout the state.

Factors that may potentially impact water supply include precipitation, stream flows, groundwater levels, reservoir levels, short-term climate predictions, and soil moisture.

What can customers do to help?

Customers can be mindful of the potential for persistent drought conditions in our community and implement measures to conserve water.

Please help spread the word! Encourage your family, friends, and others to be better stewards of our water resources. Help conserve water, every little bit helps! Here are some tips that can make a difference:

In the kitchen

- Minimize the use of kitchen sink disposals (they use a lot of water to operate properly). Instead, start a compost pile.
- Store drinking water in the refrigerator rather than letting the tap run to get a cool glass of water.
- Do not use running water to defrost meat or frozen foods; defrost them overnight in the refrigerator.
- When washing dishes by hand, fill one basin with soapy water. Quickly rinse under a slow stream from the faucet. Use the dirty water to run your sink disposal if necessary.
- Only run the dishwasher when fully loaded.

In the bathroom

- Check toilets for leaks by adding food coloring to the tank. If the toilet is leaking, color will appear in the tank within 30 minutes.
- Check toilets for worn out, corroded or bent parts.

- Consider purchasing low flow toilets that cut water use by 20 percent.
- Avoid unnecessary flushing. Dispose of tissues, insects, etc. in the trash.
- Replace your shower head with a low flow version.
- Take shorter showers. Try a “Navy” shower; get wet, turn off the water, soap and scrub, then turn on the water to rinse.
- In the shower, regulate water temperature by decreasing hot or cold water flow.
- Don’t let the water run while washing your face, shaving or brushing your teeth.

Around the house

- Adjust your washing machine to use less water.
- Install a hot water re-circulation system.
- Never put water down the drain that can be used for cleaning or watering plants.
- Reuse fish tank water on your plants—it makes great fertilizer.
- Repair dripping faucets.
- Install flow restrictors on all faucets.
- Insulate your water pipes. You’ll get hot water faster.

In the yard

- Raise your lawn mower blade to at least three inches. A higher cut encourages grass roots to grow deeper, shades the root system and holds soil moisture.
- Go easy on the fertilizer. They increase the need for water and are a source of water pollution.
- Mulch to retain moisture in the soil.
- Control weeds. They compete with plants for water.
- Minimize the grass areas, because less grass means less water.
- Cut back plants that wilt or show die-back to reduce their need for water from the roots.
- Collect rainwater and the water that drips from your air conditioning unit to water plants.

More water conservation information is available at <https://epd.georgia.gov/watershed-protectionbranch/water-conservation>.