

**Water Shortage Response Plan
Burke County, North Carolina
REVISED – March 2023**

The procedures herein are written to reduce potable water demand and supplement existing drinking water supplies whenever existing water supply sources are inadequate to meet current demands for potable water.

I. Authorization

The Burke County Manager shall enact the following water shortage response provisions whenever the trigger conditions outlined in Section IV are met. In his absence, the General Services Director will assume this role.

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II. Notification

The following notification methods will be used to inform water system employees and customers of a water shortage declaration: employee e-mail announcements, notices at municipal buildings, notices in water bills and on the [Burke County Water and Sewer homepage](#). Required water shortage response measures will be communicated through [The Morganton News Herald](#), PSA announcements on local radio and cable stations, and on the [Burke County website](#). Declaration of emergency water restrictions or water rationing will be communicated to all customers by telephone through use of reverse 911.

III. Levels of Response

Five levels of water shortage response are outlined in the table below. The five levels of water shortage response are: voluntary reductions, mandatory reductions I and II, emergency reductions and water rationing. A detailed description of each response level and corresponding water reduction measures follow below.

Burke County Water Shortage Response Plan

Stage	Response	Description
1	Voluntary Reductions	Water users are encouraged to reduce their water use and improve water use efficiency; however, no penalties apply for noncompliance. Water supply conditions indicate a potential for shortage.
2	Mandatory Reductions I	Water users must abide required water use reduction and efficiency measures; penalties apply for noncompliance. Water supply conditions are significantly lower than the seasonal norm and water shortage conditions are expected to persist.
3	Mandatory Reductions II	Same as in Stage 2
4	Emergency Reductions	Water supply conditions are substantially diminished and pose an imminent threat to human health or environmental integrity.
5	Water Rationing	Water supply conditions are substantially diminished and remaining supplies must be allocated to preserve human health and environmental integrity.

In Stage 1, Voluntary Reductions, all water users will be asked to reduce their normal water use by 5%. Customer education and outreach programs will encourage water conservation and efficiency measures including: irrigating landscapes at a minimum of two days per week, a maximum of one inch per week; preventing water waste, runoff and watering impervious surfaces; reduction of residential vehicle washing; washing only full loads in clothes and dishwashers; using spring-loaded nozzles on garden hoses; and identifying and repairing all water leaks.

In Stage 2, Mandatory Reductions I, all customers are expected to reduce their water use by 10% in comparison to their previous month’s water bill. In addition to continuing to encourage all voluntary reduction actions, the following restrictions apply: irrigation is limited to a half inch per week between 8PM and 8AM two day a week; outdoor use of drinking water for washing impervious surfaces is prohibited; eliminate residential vehicle washing; and all testing and training purposes requiring drinking water (e.g. fire protection) will be limited.

In Stage 3, Mandatory Reductions II, customers must continue actions from all previous stages and further reduce water use by 20% compared to their previous month’s water bill. Limit lawn and landscape irrigation to no more than one day a week. Prioritize and meet with commercial and industrial large water customers and meet to discuss strategies for water reduction measures including development of an activity schedule and contingency plans. Additionally, in Stage 3, a drought surcharge of 1.5 times the normal water rate applies.

In Stage 4, Emergency Reductions, customers must continue all actions from previous stages and further reduce their water use by 25% compared to their previous month’s water bill. A ban on all use of drinking water except to protect public health and safety is

implemented. Meet with corporations, cities and town’s supplying water to Burke County, commercial and industrial large water customers to discuss and prioritize strategies for water reduction measures including development of an activity schedule and contingency plans. Prepare to implement Emergency Plan.
Drought surcharges increase to 2 times the normal water rate.

The goal of Stage 5, Water Rationing, is to provide drinking water to protect public health (e.g. residences, residential health care facilities and correctional facilities). In Stage 5, all customers are only permitted to use water at the minimum required for public health protection. Firefighting is the only allowable outdoor water use and pickup locations for distributing potable water will be announced according to Burke County’s Emergency Response Plan. Drought surcharges increase to 5 times the normal water rate.

IV. Triggers

Burke County is provided water by purchase principally from the Icard Water Corporation, the Town of Valdese, and the City of Morganton. When any of these Towns declare a water shortage, Burke County is required to do so as well. During this time Burke County General Services Director will stay in close contact with Icard Water Corp., Valdese and Morganton and follow their triggers.

Return to Normal

When water shortage conditions have abated and the situation is returning to normal, water conservation measures employed during each phase should be decreased in reverse order of implementation. Permanent measures directed toward long-term monitoring and conservation should be implemented or continued so that the community will be in a better position to prevent shortages and respond to recurring water shortage conditions.

V. Enforcement

The provisions of the water shortage response plan will be enforced by Burke County General Services department and local law enforcement personnel. Violators may be reported to the County’s phone line or the e-mail contact listed on the county’s website. Citations are assessed according to the following schedule depending on the number of prior violations and current level of water shortage.

Water Shortage Level	First Violation	Second Violation	Third Violation
Voluntary Reductions	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mandatory Reductions (Stages 2 and 3)	Warning	\$250	Discontinuation of Service
Emergency Reductions	\$250	Discontinuation of Service	Discontinuation of Service
Water Rationing	\$500	Discontinuation of Service	Discontinuation of Service

Drought surcharge rates are effective in Stages 3, 4 and 5.

VI. Public Comment

Customers will have multiple opportunities to comment on the provisions of the water shortage response plan. First, a draft plan will be available at the County Office for customers to view. A notice will be included in customer water bill notifying them of such. Also, a draft plan will be published on the Burke County website. All subsequent revisions to the draft plan will be published at least 30 days prior to an adoption vote by Burke County Commissioners.

VII. Variance Protocols

Applications for water use variance requests are available from the Burke County website and County Office. All applications must be submitted to the County Office for review by the County Manager or his designee. A decision to approve or deny individual variance requests will be determined within two weeks of submittal after careful consideration of the following criteria: impact on water demand, expected duration, alternative source options, social and economic importance, purpose (i.e. necessary use of drinking water) and the prevention of structural damage.

VIII. Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the Burke County water shortage response plan will be determined by comparing the stated water conservation goals with observed water use reduction data. Other factors to be considered include frequency of plan activation, any problem periods without activation, total number of violation citations, desired reductions attained and evaluation of demand reductions compared to the previous year's seasonal data.

IX. Revision

The water shortage response plan will be reviewed and revised as needed to adapt to new circumstances affecting water supply and demand, following implementation of emergency restrictions, and at a minimum of every five years in conjunction with the updating of our Local Water Supply Plan. Further, a water shortage response planning work group will review procedures following each emergency or rationing stage to recommend any necessary improvements to the plan to Burke County Commissioners. The Burke County General Services Director is responsible for initiating all subsequent revisions.