

Memorandum

*Flex your power!
Be energy efficient!*

To: ALL EMPLOYEES

Date: February 6, 2014



File:

From: MALCOLM DOUGHERTY
Director

Subject: CALTRANS WATER CONSERVATION AND DROUGHT ACTION PLAN

Caltrans has been a leader in water conservation practices in project design, building operations, construction and maintenance activities since the drought of 1976-1978. Our water conservation efforts have served as a model for many local and state agencies. We should acknowledge we have been doing a good job, but there is always room for us to improve by expediting the implementation of a drought action plan. As California is again in a period of severe drought, finite water resources and increasing water cost make efficient water use critical. Caltrans must reduce water use in operating Caltrans' facilities and performing construction and maintenance on the State Highway System, while protecting the state's \$1.4 billion investment in highway planting and helping to ensure there is sufficient water for all Californians. Facing the worst drought in recorded California history, we must act decisively to curtail water use to meet the Governor's 20 percent reduction mandate. In those areas of the state where a critical water shortage exists, further conservation efforts will be required.

Caltrans owns and manages over 30,000 acres of irrigated landscaping which functions to reduce erosion and graffiti, protects stormwater quality, and meets environmental mitigation commitments. Approximately 75 percent of all water used by Caltrans is for the irrigation of highway vegetation. Maintenance forces are charged with operating irrigation facilities with the goal to manage water use efficiently while maintaining vegetation in a healthy condition.

To comply with the Governor's emergency drought declaration and in anticipation of future additional restrictions we must also do our part to conserve water at our state owned facilities and in maintenance and construction activities. I am asking that the following actions be implemented:

- 1) Maintenance forces will immediately implement actions to reduce irrigation use by 50 percent.
- 2) Maintenance forces will begin evaluating and repairing existing irrigation systems to efficiently apply water.
- 3) Irrigation of highway landscaping shall be curtailed in areas identified by the California Department of Public Health as "severe water shortage areas", including portions of Fresno, Madera, Mariposa, Kern, Amador, Mendocino, Nevada Placer, and Santa Cruz counties, and the cities of Healdsburg and Cloverdale in Sonoma County.
- 4) Existing Maintenance and Construction practices shall utilize recycled water wherever feasible.
- 5) All highway planting work shall be postponed in areas identified by the California

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Department of Public Health as “severe water shortage areas.”

- 6) All non-essential highway planting work shall be postponed statewide.
- 7) Districts shall identify a qualified “Water Manager” to act as the point of contact for water conservation efforts.
- 8) District Maintenance and Landscape Architecture staff shall collaborate to identify existing highway planting that can survive with reduced or no supplemental water and shut off automatic irrigation systems at these locations as appropriate. These areas shall be monitored and water systems operated manually to ensure vegetation survives, to protect the state’s investment.
- 9) As funds allow, begin replacing building fixtures and irrigation components with more efficient models and innovative technology.
- 10) Caltrans employees are asked not to wash their state vehicles, except in the case where it would present a potential health and safety issue to the driver.

These actions constitute Caltrans initial drought response. As conditions in California change over the next few months, we may need to increase our water conservation efforts. Additionally, detailed direction regarding the implementation of these actions will be forthcoming from the Divisions of Maintenance, Construction, and Facilities.

We are facing a difficult situation, but with prudent and practical actions each of us can contribute to conserving water this year to meet the Governor’s goal of a 20 percent reduction in water use and assist our fellow Californians to get through the drought with as little impact as possible.