

1,231 in Fresno still water daily, but many others now conserving

By Mark Grossi
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More than three-quarters of the folks who were watering every day in early June changed their ways by early July, say Fresno water leaders.

In June, 5,560 customers were watering daily — using millions of gallons of water in violation of the city's rules, which only allow twice-a-week landscape irrigation. This month, the number dropped to 1,231.

Fresno is supposed to show a 28% reduction in water use compared to 2013. City officials say residents are succeeding, by and large. Officials are identifying and talking with those who are not complying with watering rules.

[The last time I wrote](#) about this issue, people were asking: How does the city know all this stuff? How do they know when I'm watering and how much I'm using? How do they know it's me and not my neighbor?

I'm sticking with my first answer: computers and smart water meters.

Flush a toilet in the middle of the night, and your water meter knows about it. The meter tells the city's computer system, which records time and water usage. But there's more to it.

The city has 133,000-plus accounts. How do they know which one is you?

133,000 water customers are in Fresno, and the city can track all of them

Your property has an assessor parcel number. Everybody gets one. That parcel number is attached to your water account. So officials can find out exactly which properties are watering at the wrong times.

How do they know the bump in water use is for your landscape and not for something like topping off your swimming pool?

City spokesman Mark Standriff says the difference between topping off a pool and watering landscape is pretty distinct. He says topping off a pool requires maybe 100 gallons or so. The landscaping is more like 500 gallons plus.

Standriff also says there's a pattern of water use for many customers. There's a 30- to 50-gallon bump between 6 and 7 a.m., then water use drops dramatically throughout the day.

Typically, landscape use will show up as an isolated burst of hundreds of gallons in the evening or in the early morning hours.

The city says it contacts people to check out these big spikes of water use on the wrong days. If a little education fails to stop the violations, there's a whole process for fining and further educating water customers.

We talked about fines last time. There are more [drastic measures](#). They can restrict the water flow to your house.

City workers can install a device that will slow the amount of water coming into your property from the main line in your neighborhood. It's an option all over California, but I have not heard of any local city or water company using it yet.

I would not expect to see it in Fresno, but you never know. If we see another dry winter, all kinds of dramatic ideas will be on the table.

Dark and stormy in July

The rainfall over the weekend broke a monthly Fresno record that had stood for more than a century. [In July 1913](#), the city had .33 of an inch of rain. Over the weekend, Fresno got .36 of an inch. The city had .07 of an inch from two brief events earlier this month, so the overall total is .43 of an inch for July.

This is the most significant July rain Fresno has seen in 14 years. And it has been more than two decades — 1992 — since the city had this much rain in the hottest month of the year.

Someone asked if this was the start of El Niño. The National Weather Service in Hanford says the rain came from remnants of Tropical Storm Dolores. I haven't heard any meteorologists connecting this to El Niño.

But plenty of weather experts are talking about El Niño forming in the Pacific Ocean, as [our weekend story](#) said.

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