

**WATER AVAILABILITY INFORMATION FOR
GWINNETT COUNTY RESIDENTS, VISITORS AND SHAREHOLDERS
FROM GWINNETT COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
October 25, 2007**

The drought we're experiencing is not a Gwinnett County or metro Atlanta phenomenon. Much of the southeastern U.S., including the northern third of Ga., is experiencing the same exceptional drought. Recent news reports have mentioned a variety of issues concerning water availability: withdrawals from Lake Lanier by the US Army Corps of Engineers; concerns of the governors of Alabama and Florida; an order by Governor Perdue to reduce consumption by 10%; and more. By far, the primary cause of our current situation is the lack of significant rainfall over an extended period of time, and no immediate relief is in sight. In the state of Georgia, only 1931 and 1954 were drier than the conditions we have faced in 2007. We've been in a dry weather cycle for several years and can hope that this cycle changes soon. As individuals living in Gwinnett County and the region, we have very little individual control over issues regarding water releases and absolutely no control over rainfall amounts. We are, however, in complete control over our consumption of this valuable resource. We can have a positive effect by paying closer attention to the ways in which we use water.

Gwinnett County residents use fewer gallons of water per day, 111-118, than the regional average of 168. We are not in an emergency or 'panic' situation but we are in a situation of serious concern. Those in the Emergency Management profession would much rather mitigate, prevent and avoid an emergency than to respond to it. Most disasters are relatively short-term in nature but the loss of water resources would not be. The best way we can approach the situation as individuals is to improve conservation practices. If we make it a goal to reduce water consumption each day, we can help address water availability issues.

There are a variety of drought- and weather-related websites that provide a lot of information. Some of them are: Gwinnett County, <http://www.gwinnettcounty.com>; the National Weather Service, <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/ffc/>; and the U.S. Drought Monitor, <http://drought.unl.edu/dm/monitor.html>. Using these websites and their many links can provide a lot of valuable information. The following list also shows many ways in which we can reduce our individual consumption of water. Though some of them may involve a bit of inconvenience, it's a small price to pay in an effort to have water in the months and years to come. Feel free to share all of this information with others.

Water Conservation Tips

Bathroom

Use faucet aerators to reduce consumption. Never let water go down the drain if there are other uses for it. Even fish-tank water can be used to water plants. Repair leaks in faucets and toilets. A leak of one drop per second will waste 2,700 gallons of water a year.

Don't let the water run while washing your face, brushing teeth or shaving. Use an electric razor.

Install water-saving showerheads. Take a shower instead of a bath, and shorten the shower time to no more than 5 minutes. Take a "Navy" shower – get wet, turn the water off and lather, then turn the water on for the quick rinse. If a tub bath is a must, close the drain first and fill the tub no more than 1/3 full. An added benefit is energy reduction. Catch "gray" water from the shower and use it to water plants.

Flush less. Install low-flow toilets (unlike earlier models, low flow toilets available today receive higher marks from consumers for overall performance). Don't use the toilet as a trash receptacle. If the toilet is an older model that uses 3.5 to 7 gallons per flush, consider installing a "tank bank" – a non-corrosive container, filled with water and then sealed, that can be put into the tank away from the flapper mechanism. Install a flapper that can be adjusted to provide the exact amount of water necessary for an effective flush. Test for a leaking toilet by putting a few drops of food coloring into the tank. If the food coloring makes its way to the bowl in a few minutes, there's a leak.

Kitchen

Never let water go down the drain if there are other uses for it. Repair dripping faucets. A leak of one drop per second will waste 2,700 gallons of water a year.

Wash only full loads of dishes. Reduce dishwashing. Use a rubber spatula to scrape dishes clean to limit pre-rinse. Let really dirty pans or dishes soak before washing, which will shorten washing time. If washing by hand, use one sink of soapy water and rinse with short bursts or under a low stream of water. Most newer model dishwashers don't require pre-rinsing. Buy energy- and water-saving dishwashers. Use disposable (bio-degradable is best) plates, utensils, etc. for meals.

Refrigerate a bottle or glass of water instead of letting a faucet flow until the water runs cold.

Collect the water that is wasted while waiting for the hot water to reach the faucet or showerhead. Use this to water your houseplants or outdoor planters. Do the same with water that is used to boil eggs or steam vegetables.

Install faucet aerators to reduce consumption.

Don't clean vegetables under running water. Clean them in a bowl with water or spray water in short bursts. Use the leftover "gray" water and use it to water plants.

Don't use running water to defrost foods. Plan ahead and defrost them overnight in the refrigerator.

Compost fruit and vegetable leftovers instead of putting them in the kitchen sink disposal. Use "gray" water to operate the disposal. To eliminate odors from other leftovers, place them in plastic zippered bags and put them in the garbage.

Laundry

Wash only full loads of laundry and wash less frequently. Wear clothing more than once before washing. If washing less than a full load is necessary, reduce the water level.

Household

Turn off the lights and TV when you are not in the room and cut the air conditioner back when you are not at home. Large volumes of water are used to produce energy. Reducing energy demands can reduce the water needed to produce that energy.

Insulate water pipes.

Outdoors

Use a broom or blower to clean driveways and sidewalks.

Check for leaking faucets and spigots. Make a water meter reading before and after a two-hour period when water is not being used. If the reading is not the same at the end, there's a leak.

Don't install fountains, ponds or pools unless you can use recycled water. Use water saving pool filters in established pools. Cover the pool to reduce evaporation.