



CITY OF CAPE TOWN  
ISIXEKO SASEKAPA  
STAD KAAPSTAD

# LEVEL 4B WATER RESTRICTIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

CITY OF CAPE TOWN  
WATER & SANITATION

1 July 2017



**no drop**  
CERTIFICATION  
water use efficiency  
REGULATION



**green drop**  
CERTIFICATION  
waste water service  
REGULATION



**blue drop**  
CERTIFIED  
Excellent drinking water quality  
MANAGEMENT

*These questions and answers have been prepared to help you comply with the Cape Town Level 4b water restrictions.*

*Level 4b restrictions can be viewed [here](#)*

*To find out how you can make water saving a way of life, visit [www.capetown.gov.za/thinkwater](http://www.capetown.gov.za/thinkwater)*

## Contents

General .....	2
Irrigation and watering .....	11
Swimming pools .....	14

## General

### 1. What are the main differences between Level 4 and Level 4b water restrictions?

Level 4b restrictions are in some instances stricter while restating the ban on all use of municipal drinking water for outside and non-essential purposes as in Level 4. Key enhancements include:

- You should now not use more than 87 litres of municipal drinking water per person per day, for basic human needs (cumulatively throughout the day wherever you are). This is in line with the Level 4b adjusted target of 500 million litres of collective water use per day for the City.
- No swimming pools may be filled or topped up with municipal drinking water - even if fitted with a pool cover. This includes the filling of new pools or the refilling of an existing pool after a repair. This applies to private and public pools, including pools at clubs, businesses and institutions.
- No washing of vehicles (including taxis), trailers, caravans and boats with municipal water. This applies to both formal and informal car washes, as well as residential customers. Vehicles etc. must be washed with non-drinking water, or cleaned with waterless products or dry steam cleaning processes.

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### 2. Where can I download the full copy of Level 4b water restrictions and any other applicable water regulations?

Level 4b restrictions can be downloaded [here](#). Or visit the City's website: [www.capetown.gov.za/thinkwater](http://www.capetown.gov.za/thinkwater).

Water use (including water saving regulations) is also regulated in terms of the Water by-law. See our [Know your water regulations](#) webpage for more information.

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### 3. What can I do?

Please immediately:

- Cut your water use to less than 87 litres, per person, per day in total
- Use municipal drinking water only for essential washing, cooking and drinking purposes, and only use indoors
- [Check and fix all leaks on your property](#).
- Adhere to all water restrictions and the [Water By-law](#)

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### 4. Do you have any water saving tips?

Our top ways to save water:

- Only flush the toilet when necessary. Don't use it as a dustbin.

- Cut your showers to two minutes. A standard (non-water-saving) showerhead can use up to 16 litres of water per minute.
- Collect your shower, bath and basin water and re-use it to flush your toilet, water the garden or wash your car.
- Wait for a full load before running washing machines and dishwashers. The rinse water from some washing machines can be re-used for the next wash cycle.
- Use a cup instead of running taps in the bathroom or kitchen when brushing teeth, shaving, drinking, etc.
- Defrost foods in the fridge or naturally, rather than placing it under running water.

For further saving tips please visit the **water savings page** on the City's website: [www.capetown.gov.za/thinkwater](http://www.capetown.gov.za/thinkwater).

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## 5. What is the City doing to save water?

We have implemented a wide range of measures to save water, including:

- Finding and repairing underground water leaks
- Continuing with pressure reduction programmes to reduce the flow of water at a time, as well as water losses through leakage in the pipework of the distribution system
- Made more money available for our first line response teams to attend to reported water faults
- Improving response times for water complaints
- Increased staff numbers to deal with water management device complaints and faults
- Promoting the use of treated effluent (recycled water) or borehole water instead of drinking water for irrigation purposes
- Offering plumbing repairs for indigent households free of charge
- Reducing water losses from our systems
- Replacing ageing water mains
- Creating awareness for water saving, school visits and communication.

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## 6. Our dams are nearly empty. Water restrictions have clearly failed. How effective are water restrictions?

Saving water and fixing leaks are critically important during times of drought.

The total volume of water saved between January 2016 (the start of Level 2 restrictions) and May 2017 is equivalent to the volume of the Wemmershoek and Steenbras Lower Dams combined!

The water restrictions imposed in 2005 during the previous drought resulted in 15.5% savings - most of which was sustained. This indicates that a large proportion of consumers changed their habits permanently and installed alternatives, such as boreholes, greywater irrigation systems, and in some cases laid paving to minimise irrigation requirements.

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## 7. How does the City police restrictions?

Water inspectors monitor compliance with the restriction measures as well as the Water By-law and issue spot fines where applicable.

The public are normally our most vigilant enforcers and we want you to report anyone who does not adhere to water restrictions using the following methods:

- Call [0860 103 089](tel:0860103089) (choose option 2: water related faults)
- Email [water@capetown.gov.za](mailto:water@capetown.gov.za)
- Online through our [Service Requests](#) tool
- SMS 31373 (max of 160 characters)

These reports are used to target blitz in different areas. In addition, the City is using water billing information to focus compliance indicatives towards high water consumers.

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## **8. What are the penalties?**

Currently spot fines of up to R5 000 may be issued by the City of Cape Town in terms of the Water By-law. Alleged repeat offenders can be summonsed to appear in court and on conviction may be liable for a fine of up to R10 000, or imprisonment of up to five years, or both.

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## **9. Can I top up koi ponds and must the pond be fitted with a cover?**

The regulations do not specifically mention fish ponds. However, you are strongly encouraged to limit any use of municipal drinking water until the water restrictions have been lifted. More specifically, we request that you don't establish any new fish ponds or introduce fish to any existing water features.

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## **10. Am I allowed to wash my car?**

Private, formal and informal car washes washing of cars using municipal drinking water is not allowed. Cars must be washed with non-drinking water, or cleaned with waterless products or dry steam cleaning processes.

We suggest that you wash your vehicle less often and write on the vehicle's bodywork "I'M SAVING WATER" to show your support.

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## **11. I have reported a water leak. Why hasn't anyone come to fix it?**

The city services a pipe network of close to 11 000 km (the equivalent distance from here to Australia), to which 650 000 properties are connected. Every year approximately 3 000 burst water mains and more than 30 000 leaking water connections are repaired. Old pipes are more likely to leak or burst and the City has an extensive pipe replacement project underway. Although pipe replacement is expensive, many kilometers are replaced each year and this has resulting in a dramatic reduction in pipe bursts.

We have increased the number of repair teams available in order to repair leaks as soon as possible. Nevertheless, the number of repair teams is limited and large pipe bursts and leaks are prioritised over smaller bursts and leaks. Once a leak is reported, a first response team will assess the leak or burst and this information is used to assign an appropriately equipped repair team as well as to prioritise the repair. Most large pipe bursts are attended to within one hour and repaired as soon as possible, however, smaller leaks may take some time to be repaired. A large burst can waste more water in a few seconds than a small burst or leak can over a period of a week. The City often receives complaints about bursts and leaks being forgotten. However, the reality is mostly that repair teams are simply prioritising larger bursts elsewhere in the city.

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**12. How, where and what is the procedure that should be followed to apply for an exemption should I be entitled/request for one?**

See our website for how to [apply for exemption from water restrictions](#). Please be patient. A delay may be experienced during busy periods.

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**13. I need to apply for exemption for more than one property. Do I need to submit an application for each property or can I submit a single application?**

A single application can be submitted for multiple properties - as long as the application is relevant to all properties. For example, a nursery business with multiple outlets across the city can submit a single application. Please include a list of all erf numbers and addresses as an annexure.

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**14. Will I be penalised or punished with some additional penalty fee for not using less water than what I am currently using?**

The City has been monitoring and engaging with high users. We will issue letters to warn those with unjustifiably high consumption levels that we will install water management devices at their properties to limit their water use to acceptable levels.

In addition, the price of water has increased – especially for large domestic consumers. This means that you will pay more for the same amount of water used. This is necessary in order to encourage water savings. Due to the city's increasing block tariff for domestic consumers, this will have very little effect on small consumers and water efficient households. On the other hand, large domestic consumers will pay a significantly higher marginal price for water.

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**15. I want to clean my roof using a high-pressure hose, but I am not using a contractor. Do I need an exemption and will I get it?**

Cleaning roofs with municipal drinking water is not allowed.

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**16. What is normal consumption and how much water should I be using? How do I know how much water I am using?**

Due to the current drought crisis, the City requests all residents to limit water consumption to less than 87 litres per person per day.

Thus, a two-person household should use under 5.5 kl during a billing cycle and a four-person household should use under 11 kl during a billing cycle, and so on.

Please note that a five-minute shower can use between 40 litres and 70 litres, and flushing a toilet uses 6 – 21 litres, depending on the size of the cistern. One shower and five flushes of an average-sized toilet will push a person over their daily allowance, and this is not even taking into account other necessities such as drinking, cooking, and washing of clothes and dishes. As such, the City recommends limiting time under the shower to two minutes and only flushing the toilet when absolutely necessary.

Before water restrictions, most households used between 6 and 20 kl of water a month (between 200 and 600 litres per day). However, houses with large gardens and swimming pools generally use much more. For more information see the Consumers section of the [Water Services and the Cape Town Urban Water Cycle booklet](#).

Your monthly consumption is printed on your municipal account in kilolitres (kl). One kilolitre is a 1 000 litres. Your meter reading and consumption can also be monitored via [e-Services](#). Find out [how to register](#). Please note that consumption is dependent on the interval between meter readings. An estimate is generated if your meter was not read in that month. Alternatively, you can read your own meter and keep track of your consumption.

Remember that your water and sewerage bill depends on your consumption. The price of water increases the more you use. This is in order to encourage water saving. Find out more on [tariffs](#).

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**17. Experience and common sense show us that rich people, who are also the heaviest water users, will be able to afford the punitive water tariffs and therefore will have no incentive to save water. Poor people, on the other hand, will not be able to afford them, so are likely to bear the brunt of the higher prices or having to cope with less water. What steps are being taken to address this?**

The first 6 kilolitres of water is free for (registered) indigent households. In addition, the lower steps of the tariff structure have low increases, while the higher steps are subject to higher percentage increases, thus assisting the poor and those who save water. Informal settlement residents receive all water for free.

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**18. A reduction in water consumption will affect the City's income from water and sewerage. How will this affect the council's operations?**

The tariff is designed to be revenue-neutral and the proposed increases are designed to recover the loss in income/revenue due to the reduction in billed consumption, so no operational consequences/effects are expected.

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**19. I understand why water tariffs increase. But why do sanitation tariffs also increase?**

Water tariffs increase (especially for large water users) to encourage water saving.

Sanitation tariffs increase for cost recovery reasons. Sanitation charges are based on water consumption as most water used ultimately ends up in the sewers. Due to the restrictions we expect to sell less water. We thus need to increase sanitation tariffs to compensate as many sanitation costs, such as staff and maintenance costs, are fixed and do not decrease with the expected lower sewage volumes. Please note that sanitation charges are capped at 35kl.

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**20. If there's a significant decrease in the flow of water through the city's sewerage system, will this affect its operation? Are there any health risks associated with this?**

Most of the water saving comes from a reduction in irrigation or other "luxury" uses such as swimming pools. It is therefore not expected that there will be any serious effect on the sewerage system. A reduction in leaks (e.g. leaking toilets) will result in lower sewer volumes. In most cases, this is a good thing. To date, there hasn't been a problem with the functioning of our sewerage systems as a result of reduced flows and no health risks have been reported. However, this is continually monitored.

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**21. How will you make allowances for large households? It would be unreasonable to expect someone living alone to be able to save as much water as a family of six living in the house next door.**

While there is no simple or inexpensive way to monitor the number of people in a household for every connection, the free water allocation for (registered) indigent households allows for 25 litres per day for a household of up to 8 people. This is the basis for the 6 kilolitres free allocation. Each and every one of us can save water, the volume/extent will differ from person to person, but whatever the volume, it makes a difference and is well appreciated.

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**22. Will Level 4b restrictions affect spray parks?**

Spray parks are not allowed to operate under Level 4b restrictions.

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**23. What special arrangements (if any) are being made to ensure the maintenance of the City's golf courses? Have you quantified the amount of water used to water golf courses?**

Almost all golf courses in the City are irrigated using either recycled (treated effluent) water from wastewater treatment plants, or water from boreholes and other resources.

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**24. Will you continue to use municipal trucks to spray road surfaces during the period of restrictions? If so, why? And how much water do they consume?**

Municipal street cleaning uses non-drinking water.

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**25. What steps is the Council, as a water consumer itself, taking to ensure it reduces its usage?**

The City continuously identifies its large water use points and engages with the relevant directorates to determine areas of water saving, for example the retro-fitting programme which entails the removal of automatic flushing urinals in its buildings. All council directorates are also expected and bound to comply with the restrictions in their water-related activities.

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**26. What steps are you expecting provincial consumers – such as schools and hospitals – to take to reduce consumption?**

The water restriction notice applies to all users. Council has embarked on a partnership with schools to help reduce consumption through its awareness and education programme on water saving and the training of school caretakers to fix leaks. Other water saving tips for [businesses and organisations](#) are available on the City's website.

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**27. Can a stepped penalty be introduced, so that those who consume less than 10 kl per month, for example, are not required to reduce their usage at all?**

This is the basic principle applied in the proposed tariff increase, those using less water pay less, and those using more water pay more.

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**28. Sectional title owners who save water will still be penalised if other owners in their block continue to be wasteful or profligate. How will you address this?**

The planned media campaign is aimed at ensuring that everyone co-operates and contributes to the targeted savings in water consumptions. It is therefore hoped that fellow water saving residents will bring the appropriate pressure to bear on those who may not be so inclined. Furthermore, all water users must comply with water restrictions and the Water By-law and all property owners must ensure that only compliant water fittings are installed.

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**29. Who are the 10 biggest water consumers in the City of Cape Town?**

Consumption figures for individual consumers are confidential and cannot be released to the public. However, the largest users in the city typically include developments such as hospitals, large shopping centres and office blocks, institutions and certain industries. Many residential properties with large gardens and swimming pools normally have high water consumption, however, all households are expected to reduce consumption during water restrictions. Large users (>10 000 kℓ/annum) are required to conduct annual water audits (in line with schedule of the Water By-law, (2010) and systems are in place to monitor their consumption.



During Level 4b restrictions, the city requests residents to use less than 87 litres per person per day. A two-person household should use under 5.5 kl during a billing cycle and a four-person household should use under 11 kl during a billing cycle, and so on.

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**30. Can boat owners rinse and flush their motors after fishing?**

Flushing of motors is permitted within the ambit of the restriction measures.

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**31. Can someone who uses borehole water to water grass and plants also use their hosepipe to wash their car?**

Yes. However, we strongly encourage you to rather use a bucket. If you do use a hosepipe then please ensure that it is fitted with an automatic self-closing device and that the correct signage is displayed.

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**32. Are notices in three languages being provided at e.g. cash offices, libraries, clinics etc.?**

Notices will be displayed at all City buildings, other public spaces and posted on [our website](#).

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**33. Are car valet services compelled to use trigger nozzles on hoses?**

Municipal drinking water must not be used to wash vehicles or boats. Non-drinking water or waterless cleaning products should be used. Non-drinking water must be used efficiently to avoid wastage.

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**34. Who do you fine if Council is contravening the water restrictions?**

This matter will be dealt with in accordance with City procedures.

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**35. Is it illegal to wash down the forecourt of a petrol station?**

Washing down petrol station forecourts is not allowed with municipal drinking water. Rather use non-drinking water.

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**36. If a person has a visible leak on their property and is not in a position to fix it, what can be done? Does Council have a system in place whereby a plumber will be sent to repair the leak and bill the tenant?**

It is the owner's responsibility to employ the services of a registered plumbing contractor to attend to the problem, at the owner's cost.

However, the City does have a programme where the properties of qualifying indigent households are repaired on a once-off basis.

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**37. I have hired a company to power wash my driveway, is this allowed under the current watering restrictions?**

No, power washing driveways with drinking water is not allowed. Rather use non-drinking water.

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**38. My charity was planning a fundraising carwash event. Can we still proceed?**

Yes, only if non-drinking water or waterless cleaning products are used.

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**39. I work in the poorer areas of the City and I regularly see large volumes of water running to waste in these areas where the occupants cannot afford to repair the leaks. What has the City done and what are they doing about this?**

The City has a project in place in terms of its policies, to repair leaks at indigent properties and install a water management device in order to control the water usage to prevent further leaks and water wastage.

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**40. Why must I save water when I see people in informal settlements wasting water which they don't pay for?**

It is important that all residents help save water. The City is sensitising residents, from all areas, about the need to use water sparingly. Water consumption from all areas (including informal settlements) is being monitored.

Water consumption per person in informal settlements is generally much lower than that of formal residential areas, where there is a greater demand for irrigation. Overall, only about 5% of Cape Town's water is consumed in informal areas. See the Consumers section of the [Water Services and the Cape Town Urban Water Cycle](#) for a breakdown of water consumption per user type.

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**41. What is the City doing about the homeless people using the City's fire hydrants to wash vehicles?**

Using fire hydrants, by anyone, for anything other than their intended purpose without permission is an illegal act (refer to section 55 of the Water [By-law](#)) so is water wastage (refer to section 37 of the Water By-law) and such contraventions will be dealt with in accordance with existing legal processes in terms of section 64 of the Water By-law. If you notice this, please contact the customer line on 0860 103089 / SMS 31373 or email [water@capetown.gov.za](mailto:water@capetown.gov.za).

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**42. Can my kids use the sprinkler in the backyard?**

No. The use of sprinklers is not allowed when using municipal drinking water.

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**43. Can I pull my vehicle along the side of a river and wash it with bucket water on the river bank? If not, why not?**

No, the cumulative impact would threaten the ecological life of the system. Rivers are considered part of a stormwater system, so abstraction without permission and disturbance of the river banks are acts in direct violation of section 4 (g) and (h) of the Stormwater Management By-law.

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**44. May paved areas be hosed down with municipal tap water?**

No. Please use a broom or non-drinking water.

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**45. I want to hire a water slide. Do I need an exemption or does the person hiring it out to me need one?**

No use of portable or temporary pools is allowed.

## **Irrigation and watering**

**46. How do the stricter Level 4b water restrictions affect watering/irrigation?**

No watering or irrigation using municipal drinking water is allowed.

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**47. Can I irrigate using buckets/irrigation system/hosepipe if connected to borehole water or an alternative water source?**

Yes. However, boreholes and wellpoints must be registered and correct signage must be displayed for all alternative water sources (boreholes, wellpoints, grey water systems and rain water tanks). See our water restrictions webpages for [homes](#) and [businesses and organisations](#) for more information on registration and signage.

All borehole, wellpoint, treated effluent and spring water users are strongly encourages:

- to irrigate only on Tuesdays and Saturdays before 09:00 or after 18:00 for a maximum of one hour per day per property
- not to irrigate within seven days of rainfall that provides adequate saturation

We further encourage you to use groundwater sources sparingly and to avoid wastage and evaporation and not to water in the heat of the day or in windy conditions.

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**48. I am physically disabled/elderly and I can't water my garden with buckets or a watering can. Do I qualify for exemption from the irrigation restrictions?**

No. Watering/irrigation with municipal drinking water is not allowed under Level 4b. If you are using non-drinking water, refer to the question above.

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**49. If I have been granted Level 4 water restrictions exemption do I need to reapply?**

All exemptions granted under Levels 2, 3 and 4 have been withdrawn. Special users, such as nurseries, customers involved in agricultural activities or with historical gardens may apply for exemption.

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**50. I've noticed my neighbour is watering using an irrigation system / hosepipe. What should I do?**

Watering with an irrigation system or hosepipe **using municipal drinking water** is not allowed. You could speak with your neighbour to see if they are aware of the watering restrictions. If they aren't aware, direct them to the City's website. If you have concerns please, contact the customer line on 0860 103 089 / SMS 31373 (max of 160 characters), email [water@capetown.gov.za](mailto:water@capetown.gov.za) or submit an online request through our [Service Requests](#) tool.

However, please note that use of hosepipes and irrigation systems connected to alternative water sources (such as boreholes, grey water systems and rain water tanks) is allowed. Check if your neighbour has the correct signage for alternative water use. Boreholes and wellpoints need to be registered and the sign should have a registration number. See our water restrictions webpages for [homes](#) and [businesses and organisations](#) for more information.

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**51. Why is the city still watering along roads?**

Some transport routes (e.g. the Integrated Rapid Transit (IRT) bus routes on the West Coast) are supplied with recycled water.

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**52. Do boreholes need to be registered? Do you pay for registration and the borehole sign?**

Wellpoints and boreholes must be registered. The registration is free and signage is provided free on registration. See our website for more information on [registering a borehole](#).

There is no charge for the consumption of borehole or wellpoint water. However, we encourage you to use groundwater sparingly and not to water in the heat of the day or in windy conditions.

**53. I have applied to register my borehole/wellpoint, but haven't received my official, free display sign from the City. Will I be fined?**

Proof of your application for registration will be emailed to you. This can be printed and kept until you receive your official (free) display sign as required by the latest water restrictions. Please note that a 4-6 week waiting period for the signs may apply in busy period. See our website for information on [how to register](#).

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**54. Do I need to apply for permission in order to sink a new borehole or wellpoint and will I be charged for using this water?**

You or your contractor will need to apply. Once installed, the borehole or wellpoint must be registered. There is no charge for using borehole or wellpoint water.

See our website pages:

- [Register a borehole](#)
  - [Apply to sink a borehole or wellpoint or use an alternative source of water](#)
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**55. Do I need a display sign if I am using bath water to water my lawn?**

Yes, when using greywater you need to put up a sign stating that you are using non-drinking water for irrigation clearly visible from a public thoroughfare.

See our water restrictions webpages for [homes](#) and [businesses and organisations](#) for further information.

Download the [Non-drinking water – Do not drink sign](#).

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**56. Can I use my own non-potable water sign?**

It depends on what type of alternative water you are using:

Yes - if you are using grey water, rainwater tanks, spring water or treated effluent water.

However, boreholes and wellpoints must be registered (or re-registered) and the official sign (provided free on registration) with a registration number must be used.

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**57. Can I use bath water to water my garden at any time or only on watering days?**

There are no restrictions on watering times when using grey water such as bath water. However, a visible signage saying you are using non-drinking water for watering your garden must be displayed. This must be clearly visible from a public thoroughfare. See our water restrictions webpages for [homes](#) for further information.

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## **58. Can historical / museum gardens be exempt from the water restrictions?**

Exemptions are only granted in exceptional circumstances. See our website for how to [apply for exemption from water restrictions](#).

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## **59. How can I report an irrigation violation?**

By any of the following methods:

- Call [0860 103 089](tel:0860103089) (choose option 2: water related faults)
  - Email [water@capetown.gov.za](mailto:water@capetown.gov.za)
  - Online through our [Service Requests](#) tool.
  - SMS 31373 (max of 160 characters)
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## **60. Are there watering restrictions for agriculture or vegetable gardens?**

No irrigation or watering using municipal drinking water is allowed. This also applies to vegetable gardens and agricultural within the City of Cape Town area. Vegetable gardens for schools, churches, homes for the elderly, shelters for homeless, homes for mentally or physically challenged and are considered special needs homes and may apply for exemption. However, bear in mind that almost all commercial farms have access to non-drinking water sources.

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## **61. I live on agricultural land; do watering restrictions apply to me?**

The water by-law with the corresponding restriction measures applies to all homes and businesses located within the City of Cape Town's jurisdiction.

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## **62. Why is irrigation being limited?**

It is the one of the largest categories of water use in the City of Cape Town.

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## **Swimming pools**

### **63. Can I fill and top up my swimming pool?**

No swimming pools may be filled or topped up with municipal drinking water - even if fitted with a pool cover. This includes the filling of new pools or the refilling of an existing pool after a repair. This applies to private and public pools, including pools at clubs, businesses and institutions.

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**64. Can I use a chemical/liquid pool cover?**

No private swimming pools may be topped up with municipal drinking water irrespective of whether a pool cover is used.

A chemical/liquid pool cover may be used to help limit evaporation from the pool. However, please be aware that this type of pool cover may not be as effective as a conventional pool cover in windy areas.

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