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Local Drought Emergency Declared by Las Virgenes Municipal Water District

Las Virgenes Municipal Water District (LVMWD) Board of Directors declared a Local Drought Emergency and enacted Stage 3 of its Water Shortage Contingency Plan (WSCP) to combat worsening statewide drought conditions.

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For Immediate Release

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Calabasas, CA – LVMWD Board of Directors declared a Local Drought Emergency during its November 2nd meeting, escalating to Stage 3 of its Water Shortage Contingency Plan. The decision comes amid rapidly worsening drought conditions and potential supply shortages.

California's worsening drought got a small boost last week from the atmospheric river that dumped rain and snow across the northern part of the state, briefly quenching the parched landscape and increasing the historically low reservoir levels. While the wet weather was a good sign, it is not nearly enough to make a substantial impact to the on-going drought throughout the state.

As climate change drives erratic and uncertain weather patterns, higher temperatures and reduced runoff, water is increasingly in short supply. Meeting water demands for industrial, manufacturing, environmental, residential and agricultural needs is expected to be incredibly challenging for the duration of the drought.

With no local sources of drinking water, LVMWD relies 100% on imported water that is primarily supplied from the State Water Project. The District expects that the California Department of Water Resources will announce a 0% allocation from the State Water Project early next month, deepening the need to conserve water locally.

Governor Newsom called for a voluntary 15% statewide reduction in water consumption, and Californians have responded but not to the level needed. The District is ramping up its outreach and education efforts to inform customers of the need for conservation and drought response measures.

“Outdoor irrigation accounts for 70% of all residential water consumption. This is where the biggest savings can be found,” said Jay Lewitt, President of the Board for LVMWD. “Declaring a local drought emergency is a wake-up call for our customers to conserve water and eliminate any waste.”

The Board also reviewed the District's enforcement actions to ensure that customers meet conservation targets. Staff advised the Board that additional measures are likely needed to be sure customers stay within their water budgets during the declared water shortage emergency.

Formal changes to the District's Administrative Code will be recommended at the November 16th LVMWD Board meeting. The potential changes include adjustments and increases to the existing penalties that currently top out at \$5.00 per hundred cubic feet of water used in excess of double a customer's monthly water budget.

Customers who continue to exceed their water budgets by a prescribed amount may also be subject to the installation of a flow restriction device. Additional details will be available for review when the agenda is published on November 12th.

"LVMWD is taking another step to escalate its drought response in support of the Governor's call for conservation and to preserve limited State Water Project supplies for next year," said Dave Pedersen, General Manager of LVMWD. "Although we're hopeful for more rain and snow in the months ahead, we cannot stand by and wait to see what happens. The conditions call for action now. We are asking customers to reduce their outdoor watering by 25%."

Be sure to follow LVMWD on Facebook, Twitter @lvmwd and Instagram @LasVirgenes_MWD to join the conversation.

Las Virgenes Municipal Water District provides potable water, wastewater treatment, recycled water and biosolids composting to more than 70,000 residents in the cities of Agoura Hills, Calabasas, Hidden Hills, Westlake Village, and unincorporated areas of western Los Angeles County.

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