

# HTA Information Sheet

## Temporary Bans on Water Use

### Landscapers



March 2012

**Fact: The Water Use (Temporary Bans) Order of 2010 prevents several uses of hosepipe for domestic use. If a water company introduces a temporary ban, landscapers cannot use hosepipes connected to domestic mains supplies.**

#### Why are temporary bans likely?

Droughts are natural events when a period of low rainfall creates a shortage of water for people, the environment or industry. Some droughts are short and intense, for example in a hot dry summer. Others are long and take time to develop. The current water resource situation in the UK follows two consecutive dry winters and an exceptionally dry spring in 2011. As a result, some parts of the UK are drier now than they were at this time of year in 1976.

#### Which regions are most affected?

East Anglia and south east England are already officially in drought.

Parts of central England, south west England and the south east of Yorkshire are also affected, and the risk of drought in the spring and summer in these areas is high.

#### How long might temporary bans last?

The replenishment of groundwater levels depends largely on winter rainfall. Most rainfall at other times is taken up by trees and native flora before it can permeate down to the rock layers where groundwater gathers.

If restrictions are implemented we should therefore be prepared for them to continue throughout the spring and summer. And if next winter should be dry for the third successive year, it is likely that any restrictions would still be in place next spring.

#### What temporary bans can the water companies impose?

Water companies have the power to implement

temporary bans without seeking approval from Government. Under previous legislation, these powers were limited to banning the use of hosepipes for watering domestic gardens and for washing private motor-vehicles. The Water Use (Temporary Bans) Order of 2010 extends these powers to nine other uses. The full list is as follows;

- Watering a garden using a hosepipe;
- Cleaning a private motor-vehicle using a hosepipe;
- Watering plants on domestic or other non-commercial premises using a hosepipe;
- Cleaning a private leisure boat using a hosepipe;
- Filling or maintaining a domestic swimming or paddling pool (all means of filling, not just hosepipes);
- Drawing water, using a hosepipe, for domestic recreational use;
- Filling or maintaining a domestic pond using a hosepipe (except when the pond contains fish or other aquatic animals);
- Filling or maintaining an ornamental fountain (all means of filling, not just hosepipes);
- Cleaning walls or windows of domestic premises using a hosepipe;
- Cleaning paths or patios using a hosepipe;
- Cleaning other artificial outdoor surfaces using a hosepipe.

***Water companies can choose to implement any or all of these restrictions of use. It is also within their powers to provide concessions for any restrictions they impose, e.g. for water-efficient drip irrigation systems, or for newly-laid turf to be watered in for a certain period.***

If temporary bans are imposed, members should consult the water company where they are operating for precise details on what restrictions, exceptions and concessions are in place.

## The law and what it means for customers

The Water Use (Temporary Bans) Order 2010 prohibits domestic users from:

- drawing mains water through a hosepipe directly for any of the uses above
- or drawing mains water through a hosepipe to fill or partly fill a container for any of the uses above.

A 'hosepipe' includes anything designed, adapted or used to serve the same purpose as a hosepipe.

Gardeners can use a hosepipe to water their garden with greywater or rainwater from a water butt.

## What advice should you give your clients?

First and foremost, affected customers should be advised to carry on gardening! However, you should encourage customers to use water wisely and follow this advice:

- If showers are forecast, do not water your garden
- Water early in the morning or late in the evening when evaporation is minimal
- Be sure to deliver water directly to the base of plants. The use of a drip-watering system will help ensure this.
- Plant trees and shrubs in well-rotted, water-retaining compost and cover soil with 2-3" (5-7cm) layer of mulch
- Don't worry about established lawns turning brown. This shows the grass has stopped growing, but most lawns will recover completely when the rain returns
- Don't cut lawns too short, as longer grass sends down deeper roots and provides more shade
- Collect rainwater off greenhouse, shed, garage and house roofs in water butts
- Mix water-storing granules in with potting compost when planting up tubs and hanging baskets
- Collect and re-use grey water from the bath or kitchen sink to water plants
- Keep borders well weeded as weeds compete for moisture
- Use a bigger pot and more compost to cool the soil and conserve moisture
- Provide shelter by planting in a spot that is protected by walls, fences, hedges or other plants

## What about Drought Permits and Drought Orders?

The Water Resources Act 1991 allows for three mechanisms for dealing with drought situations: drought permits, ordinary drought orders and emergency drought orders. In an escalating drought, water companies may have to apply to the Environment Agency for a drought permit or to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for a drought order.

Drought permits enable companies to take water from new sources, or to alter restrictions on existing abstractions.

Ordinary drought orders extend restrictions on the non-essential use of water to commercial users.

Emergency drought orders are the last resort and can only be applied for after all other supply and demand measures have been implemented. Water companies can apply to prohibit or limit the use of water for any purpose they consider appropriate, but they are required to analyse the implications for all water users, including industry. Such orders can provide for water to be supplied by standpipe or bowsers.

## Further Information

This information sheet is one of three on the HTA website to advise members in each sector:

- Temporary Bans on Water Use - Growers
- Temporary Bans on Water Use - Retailers
- Temporary Bans on Water Use - Landscapers

A poster with water saving tips is also available at [www.the-hta.org.uk/waterposter](http://www.the-hta.org.uk/waterposter) to download and print for your customers.

For further information including links to the Environment Agency and water company websites please visit [www.the-hta.org.uk/water](http://www.the-hta.org.uk/water)