

What happens if we have a drought?

Our plan explains the actions we'll take to maintain secure supplies to all customers during a drought



Why produce a Drought Plan?

All water companies are required by the Government to produce a drought plan, which sets out what we would do to maintain water supplies to customers in the event of a drought. The plans are drawn up in agreement with our regulator, the Environment Agency. The drought plans are reviewed and revised every 3 and a half years.

What is a drought?

Drought is a naturally occurring phenomenon when rainfall levels are less than normally experienced, resulting in low river, reservoir and groundwater levels. Droughts have occurred in the past and are likely to be experienced in the future.

What is the drought plan?

Our drought plan shows the actions we would take to maintain secure supplies to all customers during a period of drought.

As all droughts are different in terms of location, extent, severity and impact on the supply system the drought plan needs to be flexible to account for a range of possible scenarios.

The plan therefore gives an agreed framework of actions to allow a drought to be best managed dependent on conditions.

Always put a full load in your dishwasher or washing machine and you'll save up to **8 litres every time.**



Contents of the plan

The drought plan includes the following elements to allow us to manage a drought situation:

- Our communication plan
- Measures that might be required to reduce customer demand
- Measures that might be needed to obtain extra water supplies
- Details of how we will monitor the effects of the drought and measures taken under the drought plan

Communication plan

The communication plan sets out our proposals for increasing awareness of the water resources situation, what we as a company are doing and what customers can do to help mitigate the situation.

The plan includes communicating directly to customers and stakeholders and through the release of information through local and regional media. The key messages would include information on current water resource stocks, promotion of water efficiency and requests for responsible water use.

Customer demand measures

In 2010 the Flood and Water Management Act came into force. This new legislation has widened the uses water companies can restrict during drought beyond the previous hosepipe bans.

Activities which may be banned during a drought include:

- watering a garden using a hosepipe
- cleaning private motor vehicles with a hosepipe
- cleaning paths or patios using a hosepipe

We will use publicity campaigns and additional leakage control to reduce demand. Formal restrictions on water use would only be considered after a concerted campaign to request a voluntary reduction.

Supply measures

There are a number of supply side measures that could be used to help support supplies during a drought. These actions include drought operation of sources, inter-company resource transfers, re-commissioning of unused sources, changes to abstraction licence agreements and reduction in reservoir compensation flows.

In severe resource conditions, where drought orders or drought permits to alter abstraction licence conditions are required, there would be close consultation with the Environment Agency and relevant environmental organisations to ensure minimal impact on the environment.



Turn off the tap when you brush your teeth and save 6 litres of water – **that's up to 17,500 litres a year for the average family!**



Management and monitoring

Yorkshire Water manages the use of available water supplies. In winter and spring, river resources are used to preserve reservoir and groundwater storage. In summer, release from upland reservoir and groundwater storage is used to offset lower availability of river resources.

We provide households and businesses within the region with water services 24 hours per day, supplying water to 4.7 million domestic and 150,000 business customers. We supply an average of 1.3 billion litres of water to customers each day.

Currently our supply area is divided into 3 water resource zones for planning purposes. Over 97% of our customers are supplied by the Grid. This allows us great flexibility to supply customers from a number of sources, dependent on availability.

We continuously monitor water resources and produce a weekly water situation report. The weekly monitoring includes rainfall, river flows, groundwater levels, reservoir stocks, customer demands and water treatment works output. This report is used to manage available water supplies and to inform the Environment Agency about the current water resource situation.

The anticipation of future droughts and management during droughts are handled through the same processes, although the frequency of reporting and decision taking may be increased.

Drought warning trigger points have been developed based on historical data. This allows the current situation to be assessed against previous drought scenarios. For example, levels of groundwater sources are compared against historic levels to establish if levels are close to those experienced in a previous drought.



Reservoir storage levels are also compared with control lines that show normal storage levels for the time of year.

When a potential drought has been identified a Yorkshire Water Drought Team will be convened to manage drought planning and to implement our drought plan.

End of a drought

Frequent liaison meetings with stakeholders and regulators, in particular the Environment Agency, will be held until water resources return to safe levels and normal operations can be resumed. It may take some time for water resources to return to normal, therefore the duration of drought measures can last well beyond the return to normal rainfall patterns. This recovery period needs careful monitoring and management before drought measures can be lifted.

Take a 4 minute shower and you can save up to **4 litres of water**



How are we going to consult on our drought plan?

There are a series of steps we need to take in the production of and consultation on our drought plan

Step 1

Copy of the draft drought plan to be sent to the Secretary of State in October 2011

Step 2

Draft drought plan published on our website and in paper form for public consultation and representation

Step 3

Yorkshire Water receive consultation feedback and produce a statement detailing the considerations we have given to all received representations

Step 4

Production of the final drought plan in consultation with the Environment Agency

Step 5

Final Drought Plan published in summer 2012

You can let your views be known by:

emailing the Secretary of State at water.resources@defra.gsi.gov.uk

or you can write to the following address:

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
Drought Plan Consultation
Water Availability and Quality Programme
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Area 2C
Ergon House
Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 2AL

We also have paper copies available upon request.

Consultation dates are from 10th January to 6th March 2012.

Use a bucket and sponge to wash your car and you could save over 400 litres a wash!

