



Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

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PSC Responds to Governor's Drought Emergency Declaration

Agency will expedite drought-driven projects

MADISON – Following Governor Walker's directive to address the drought gripping Wisconsin, the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) will expedite any water utility project necessary to implement a local drought response plan or to protect municipal water wells and water supplies within ten days, eighty days sooner than what is required under state law.

Governor Scott Walker declared a state of emergency due to drought in 42 counties on July 9, 2012, and directed that all state agencies assist in the response (Executive Order #75). Following the Governor's directive, Chairperson Montgomery instructed PSC staff to complete their review of water utility construction projects in the affected counties within 10 business days, rather than the usual 90 days required under state law. The Commission will still subject the drought-driven projects to the same scrutiny applied to all utility construction projects and determine whether the project is just, reasonable, and protects ratepayers.

Drought-driven projects will be reviewed as soon as they are filed with the PSC, skipping ahead of less time-sensitive water utility projects, which will still be reviewed within the statutorily-required, 90-day review requirement. The action by the PSC is intended to ensure that local water utilities can continue to meet the water needs of homes and businesses during the drought.

“Although the drought has seriously affected farmers, the majority of Wisconsin water utilities continue to have an adequate water supply,” according to Chairperson Phil Montgomery.

“Nonetheless, some utilities have asked their customers to cut back on water usage to protect municipal and private wells, and the continuing drought may cause unforeseen water shortages—for example, a well becoming unexpectedly dry due to the lack of rainfall. The Commission stands ready to assist water utilities in dealing with this emergency.”

The PSC encourages each utility to establish a drought-response plan and to communicate its plan with customers. Customers should be informed of any water use restrictions and the status of the local water supply. The PSC also urges water utility customers in the affected regions to observe efficient water-use practices to help protect water supplies. Where outdoor water usage is allowed, customers should follow these water saving tips:

- Use water from the air conditioning condenser, dehumidifier, bath, or sink on plants or in the garden.

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- Avoid watering during the day. The best time to water is in the early morning or late evening to reduce evaporation.
- Set sprinklers to water the lawn or garden only—not the street or sidewalk.
- Check your garden hose for leaks at its connection to the spigot.
- Use a broom, not a hose, to clean driveways and sidewalks.

More water saving tips and conservation information can be found at WaterSense.Gov or on the PSC website at: <http://psc.wi.gov/conservation/water/wc-consumers.htm>.

The Governor's drought declaration (Executive Order #75) covers the following counties: Adams, Brown, Buffalo, Calumet, Clark, Columbia, Crawford, Dane, Dodge, Fond Du Lac, Grant, Green, Green Lake, Iowa, Jackson, Jefferson, Juneau, Kenosha, Kewaunee, La Crosse, Lafayette, Marquette, Manitowoc, Milwaukee, Monroe, Outagamie, Ozaukee, Portage, Racine, Richland, Rock, Sauk, Sheboygan, Trempealeau, Vernon, Walworth, Washington, Waukesha, Waupaca, Waushara, Winnebago, and Wood.

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