



south east water

Our Drought Plan

Our plans to tackle drought and water shortages – household customers

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Our plan sets out the actions we will take before, during and after periods of dry weather and drought so that we can continue to provide you with a reliable water supply. It also explains how we will protect the environment during drought, dry weather and water shortages.

Our Drought Plan

This summary of our full plan shows you how we make decisions about water supplies during periods of dry weather and drought and how these may affect you. It outlines the actions we may take to manage water supplies and how we will communicate with you as periods of prolonged dry weather and drought develop.

Everyone can protect our precious water supplies by saving water whatever the weather. This guide includes some simple steps we can all take to reduce the amount of water we use.



You can see our full Drought Plan on our website (along with other useful water-saving information) at: southeastwater.co.uk/about/resources/publications/drought-plan-2022

What is a drought?

Dry weather and droughts are natural events which happen when periods of prolonged low rainfall creates a water shortage.

This can affect water supplies to different users at different times and in a variety of ways, as follows.

Environment – rivers, groundwater levels (aquifers), wildlife and habitats

Agriculture – crop production, animal stocks and farming practices (irrigation)

General water supplies – to homes and businesses

Dry weather may affect a large part of the country or it can just affect a few smaller areas (called catchments).

Human behaviour can also lead to water shortages if, during prolonged dry weather, demand for water is higher than the amount of water available.

The south east is one of the driest parts of England. It is an area of 'serious water stress' so we rely on autumn and winter rain to:

- **refill our groundwater aquifers**
- **restore river flows, and**
- **refill our reservoirs.**

Our river, reservoir and groundwater levels will be low if we have a very dry winter. This makes it harder to meet the demand for water, especially if the following summer is hot and dry.

We cannot control the weather but we can all use water wisely. This will help us to be more resilient during periods of prolonged dry weather.

The source of our water supplies during average conditions

Source	Western	Eastern	Central	Company total
Groundwater	30%	25%	18%	73%
Surface water South East Water	7%	2%	10%	19%
Shared supplies Southern Water and Affinity Water	5%	1%	2%	8%

Our region

Our water supply area covers 5,700 square kilometres (km²) across parts of Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Berkshire and Hampshire.

*We have a warm climate and a growing population which leads to a rising demand for water.
Our region is also rich in biodiversity, protected landscapes, ancient woodlands and rare species.*



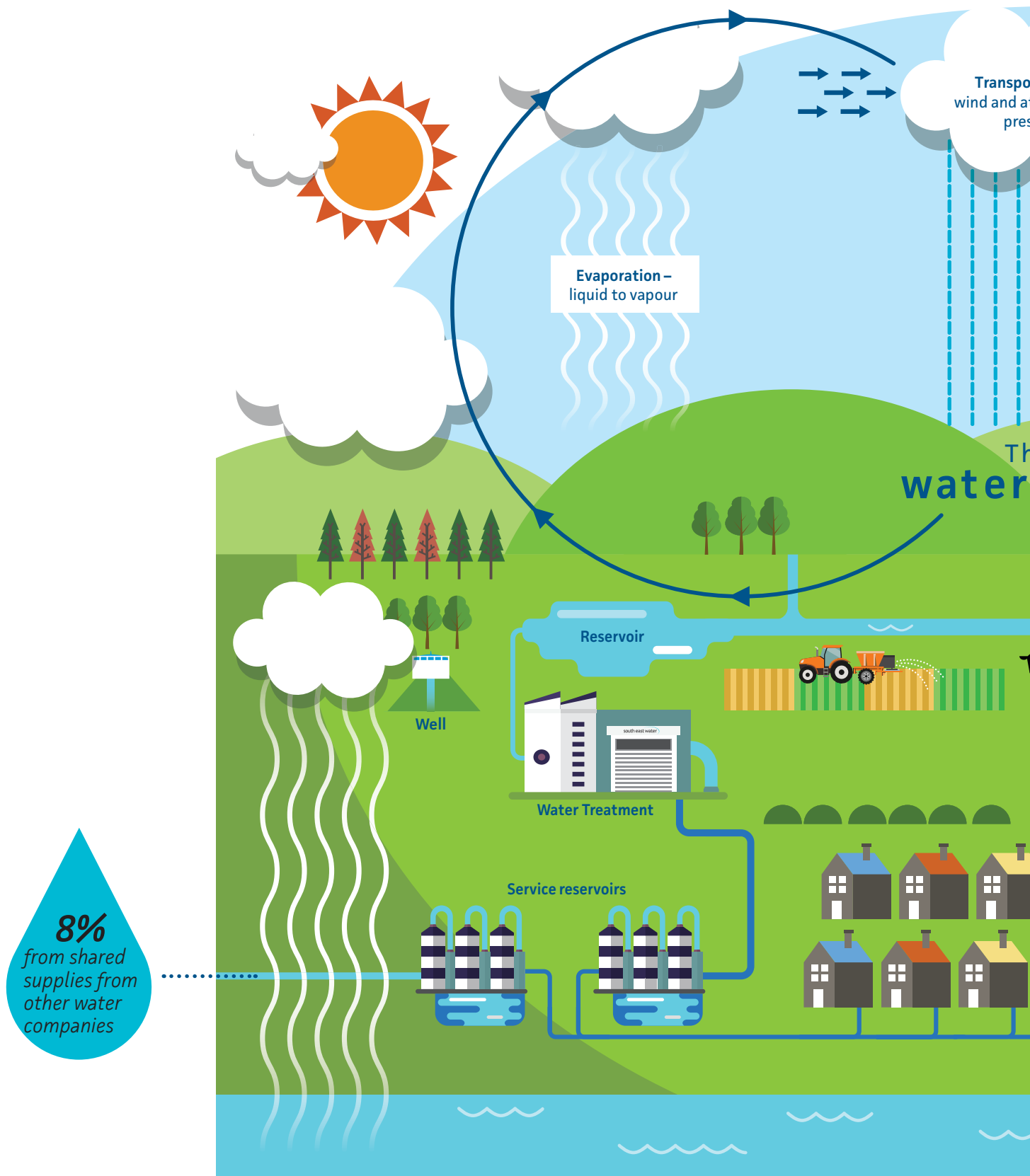
During a drought, as well as making sure there is enough water for everybody, we must do everything we can to protect these natural habitats too.

All of these factors mean that drought is a real risk to our region.



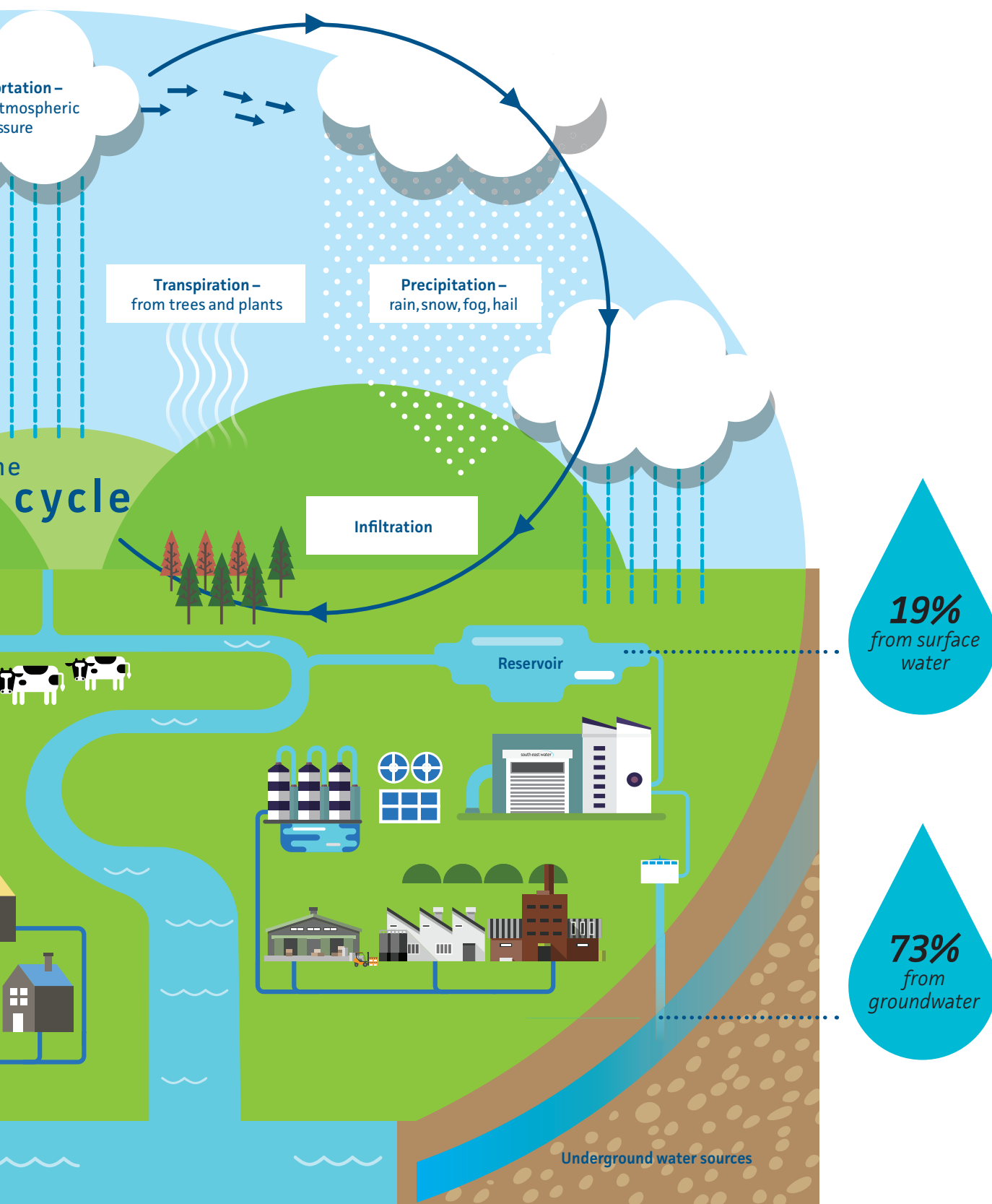
Where our water comes from

We supply around 520 million litres of safe, clean drinking water to more than 2.2 million customers every day. We bring this water to you through a huge network of reservoirs, underground water sources, treatment works and more than 14,000 km (9,000 miles) of water pipes.



More than 70% of the water we deliver is groundwater that comes from 250 boreholes and wells. The rest comes from six rivers and six reservoirs. We also share some sources, such as Bewl Water in Kent, with other water companies.

We carry out hundreds of engineering and operational projects every year to keep water flowing to your taps. Between 2020 and 2025 we're investing more than £433 million to develop new resources, extend and upgrade treatment works and lay new water mains.



What triggers a drought

We are constantly collecting and analysing information to assess our level of drought risk.

We monitor



Groundwater levels and refill



Rainfall levels



Reservoir stocks



River flows

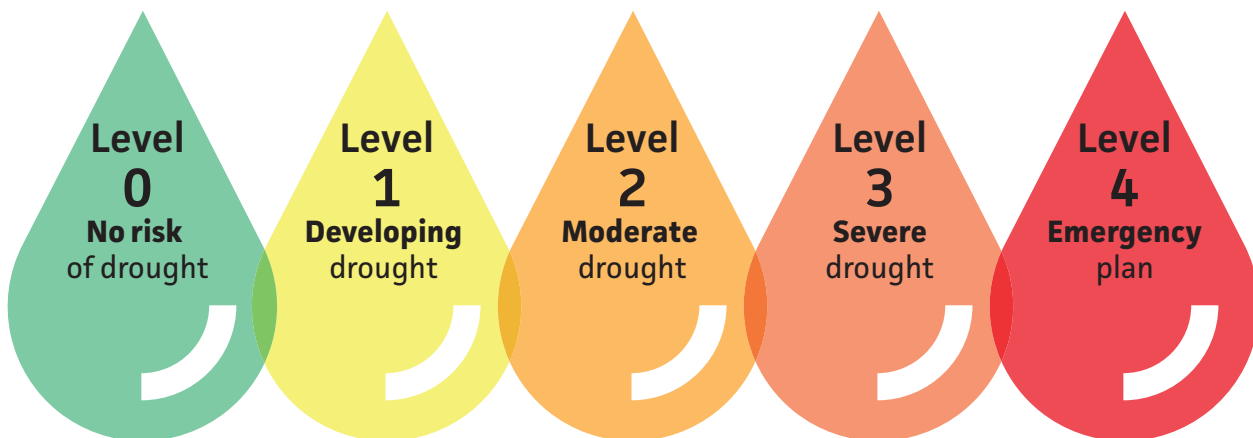


Customer demand for water

Depending on the levels of each of these they will trigger a drought warning, which is our signal to put our plan into action.

Drought warning levels

We will use a colour-coded 'traffic light' system to show how we will act as a drought develops. This makes it easy for everyone to know the seriousness of the situation and what action to expect.



Green shows that everything is normal and no restrictions are in place. Red is the most severe drought stage, and if it continues we may need to put emergency water measures in place.

We also have a 'post drought' level at the end of a drought. Past information and previous droughts have been used to create these levels.

We will communicate with you regularly as a drought develops. See **page 16** for more details about this.

In a drought, we will always focus on reducing leaks, fixing burst pipes and encouraging people not to waste water before considering any formal restrictions, such as temporary use bans (previously called hosepipe bans).

We also prioritise the actions that have the least impact on the environment when deciding how to manage water shortages and droughts. We have to balance the needs of our customers with the needs of the environment.

Check our website to find out the latest situation:






southeastwater.co.uk/waterlatest






Action during dry weather and drought

Our full Drought Plan is a framework that sets out the actions we could take. We test our plan against different types of drought and our actions will depend on how serious a situation is at the time.

Our aim is to create a plan that:

-  **is practical to put in place**
-  **contains actions that are likely to be temporary, and**
-  **is realistic and technically possible.**

In a drought we can:

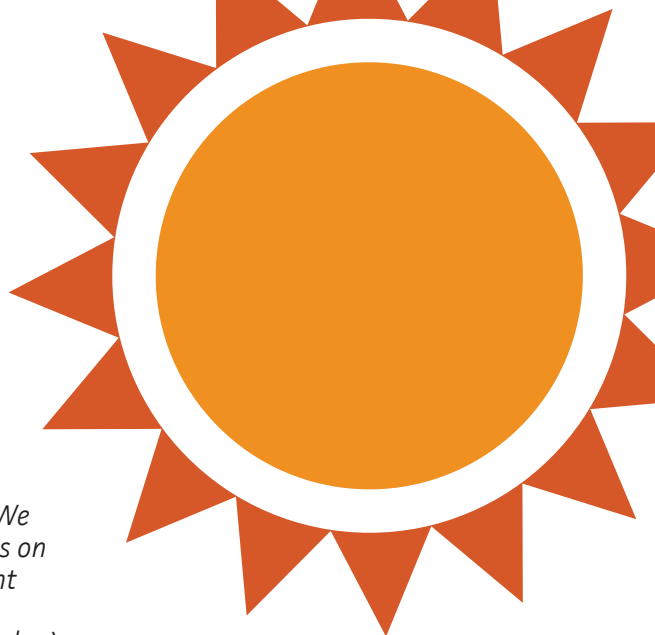
-  **move water around our network**
-  **fast-track schemes that will increase water resources**
-  **run more campaigns to promote water efficiency**
-  **work even harder to fix more leaks, and**
-  **reduce mains water pressure in our pipes.**

If we are heading to a severe drought (level 3) we may put temporary use bans in place. We might also include restrictions on non-essential use, which might help us to avoid more drastic measures (level 4 emergency plan).

Of course, we will only look at using these restrictions or actions, such as asking for permission to take more water than normal from rivers and having standpipes and water tanks in streets, when they are absolutely necessary. If we ever need to use them, we will let you know well in advance.

Our plans have been developed by experienced operational and engineering managers across South East Water. We also review national and international case studies to make sure we learn from experience.

We consult regulators, local stakeholders, environmental bodies and customer focus groups before the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) approves our final plan.



Our plans need to be flexible as every drought is different, but we always test them against the most extreme drought. We also review our plans regularly and at least every five years.

We will always consider the needs of our vulnerable customers, including those on our Priority Services Register (PSR), before we take action that may affect their water supply. You can find information about signing up to our PSR on our website at:



southeastwater.co.uk/help/priority-services

Everyone can help us during a drought

By using water sensibly, we may be able to avoid temporary restrictions or even tougher measures.



How our plan links to our other work

Our Drought Plan links closely with our Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP). The WRMP is our long-term strategy to help us meet the demand for water over the next 25 years.

We are also working on important biodiversity projects through the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP).

Our customers want us to protect our local environment for future generations, so sustainability is a key factor when we are planning how to make our water supplies more resilient to water shortages and drought.

You can find more information about our Drought Plan and our Water Resources Management Plan on our website at:



southeastwater.co.uk/about/resources/publications/drought-plan-2022

Make a difference today to protect our planet tomorrow

We don't have to wait until there's a water shortage or drought to save water.

We are already working hard to prevent and fix leaks across the vast water network and to protect your water supply. We will step up these efforts during a drought but we need your help too.

Leaks and bursts

If you spot a leak or a burst pipe, please contact us as soon as possible so our engineers can fix it quickly. You can do this on our website at:



southeastwater.co.uk/help/emergencies/report-a-leak

*If a leak or burst is dangerous or causing damage, **please call us on 0333 000 3330.***

Lines are open 24 hours a day.

Use water wisely

Saving water helps everyone and protects our planet. It also puts us in a better position to cope if we have a water shortage. Using less water now could even help us to avoid some restrictions and could save you money on water bills.

It's a good time for us all to talk to our relatives, friends and neighbours about how we as families and communities can all use water more wisely. Taking action now can help us to protect this precious resource and our environment for generations to come.



Every drop matters to people and our planet

We expect to have a constant supply of water when we turn on our taps but, when there is a water shortage, we all need to save water to make sure there is enough for everyone.







If we don't protect this precious resource, we may need to apply restrictions as a drought develops. This is not only to protect the supply of water to homes and businesses, schools and charity groups, but also to make sure there is enough for crops to grow and for animals, wildlife and the south east's special habitats to survive and thrive.

Phase 1 and 2 - temporary use bans

As a drought develops, we may introduce temporary use bans to make sure our customers always have enough water for essential activities such as drinking, washing and cooking.

A temporary use ban legally restricts activities such as using a hosepipe to:

-  **water a garden or plants**
-  **clean a private car or leisure boat**
-  **fill or top up swimming and paddling pools, ponds and fountains, and**
-  **clean walls, windows, paths, patios and decking.**

You will still be allowed to use a bucket or a watering can but we will encourage everyone to only use water for essential purposes.

We only introduce these restrictions when they are absolutely necessary and we will consult you before they start. This will usually be around two weeks before any restrictions apply.

Some restrictions do not apply to certain customers or activities due to disability, safety concerns and other issues. We review these cases individually. Concessions may also apply to many of our vulnerable or elderly customers. If the drought continues and is prolonged, we may need to remove some concessions to preserve the water stores we have.

We have a Priority Services Register for people who may need more help during a drought or other emergency. This helps us to respond quickly to those who may need extra support due to their age, ill health, disability, mental-health problems, financial worries or language barriers. See **page 15** for more details about joining this simple, free and confidential register.

We will, at the same time, be asking all businesses and organisations to find ways they can reduce their water use too.

Phase 3 and 4 - drought order

We may apply for a drought order to restrict non-essential use of water for certain activities if a drought continues and becomes more serious. These mainly affect businesses (such as car washes) and will only be used if absolutely necessary. Again, concessions and exemptions will apply.

There are more details in our full Drought Plan.

How will I know what's happening?

We try to stay in touch with our customers all year round using lots of different ways. However, in a drought, we use a special communications plan to make sure we give you the latest news and water-saving advice.

We will contact you if we plan to introduce restrictions. We will do this through emails or text messages if we have your details, adverts in local newspapers, local TV news interviews, mailshots and through our social media channels. We will also keep our website updated and set up a special drought hotline for your questions.

When will restrictions end?

Restrictions are likely to stay in place until the drought or water shortage ends but we will aim to lift them as soon as possible. This is usually when water levels start to return to normal. We will let you know when restrictions will end.

You can find details about temporary use bans and drought orders in our full Drought Plan at:



southeastwater.co.uk/about/resources/publications/drought-plan-2022

If you have any concerns about how restrictions will affect you and your family, please contact us (see **page 16**).

Top 10 ways to make a difference

Here are some easy ways to save water.

1 Take a short shower instead of a bath

The average shower only uses 30 litres of water whereas a bath uses 80 litres.



2 Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth

A running tap can use six litres of water per minute. By turning off the tap while brushing your teeth, a family of four could save up to £36 on metered water bills, as well as 17,520 litres of water per year.



3 Wash a full load

Fully load your washing machine and dishwasher every time you use it. Each washing machine cycle uses up to 100 litres of water and dishwashers use up to 50 litres.



4 Only flush the toilet when you have to

About one-third of the water we use is flushed down the toilet. Use a dual-flush whenever possible. If you've got an old cistern, why not fit a water-saving device?



5 Fix leaking taps

A dripping tap can waste more than 60 litres of water per week.



6

Make your garden water efficient

Less watering doesn't have to mean less gardening! Why not opt for plants that don't mind going without a drink for a while? Definitely leave the lawn yellow - it will bounce back when it rains again.



8 Ditch the hosepipe

Instead of using the hosepipe to wash the car, why not use a bucket and sponge? A hosepipe can use up to 1,000 litres of water in an hour.



7 Order a water butt

Collect rainwater to use on your plants and lawn.



9 Don't leave the tap running to clean dishes

Use a bowl of water instead. A running tap uses six litres of water per minute.



10 Only fill the kettle with as much water as you need

This will save both water and energy.



We have lots more advice and free water-saving devices available through our website and social media channels. We would love to know what you, your family, friends and neighbours are all doing to save water and protect our environment. We might even feature your ideas in our news updates. Email communications@southeastwater.co.uk with your top tips and photos.

How you can join our Priority Services Register

It is a good idea to join our confidential Priority Services Register if you are elderly or have a medical or health condition which means you need a constant supply of water. Joining the register gives you priority access to our services when you need extra support.

It's simple to sign up and it's free to join. It means we will contact you if we are planning work in your area that may affect your water supply. We will also give you priority support in an emergency. This could include delivering bottled water to your home.

Someone else (such as a family member or carer) can apply for you if that is easier.

To join or to find out more, please call 0333 000 2468 or fill in the form on our website at:



southeastwater.co.uk/help/priority-services



Keeping in touch

It is important that we communicate effectively with you throughout a drought.

We will keep you updated on:



how a drought is developing



what we are planning to do to tackle the situation



how our plans might affect your water supply, and



how you can help by using less water and using water sensibly.

*We will communicate with you in a wide variety of ways, including through your South East Water online account, newspapers, radio and television as well as social media platforms and our South East Water website **southeastwater.co.uk**.*



You can find more information about our plans for tackling drought on our website at:



southeastwater.co.uk/about/resources/publications/drought-plan-2022

Has reading this been useful? Is there any other information you'd like to see included?

*Let us know by **emailing communications@southeastwater.co.uk***



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