

south east water

OUR DROUGHT PLAN

*Our plans to tackle drought
and water shortages – **Business Customers***

What's inside

Where our water comes from page 6

Our 'Traffic lights' system page 8

Every drop matters page 10

**Your action plan to make a
difference** page 14

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 secure water supply. It also explains how we will protect the environment during drought, dry weather and periods of water shortages.

Our Drought Plan

We have created this summary of the full plan to show 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 view 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:

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 have an impact on 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 available water.

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:

- **recharge our groundwater aquifers**
- **restore river flows**
- **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/ Affinity Water	5%	1%	2%	8%

Our region

Our water supply area covers 5,700 sq. km 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.



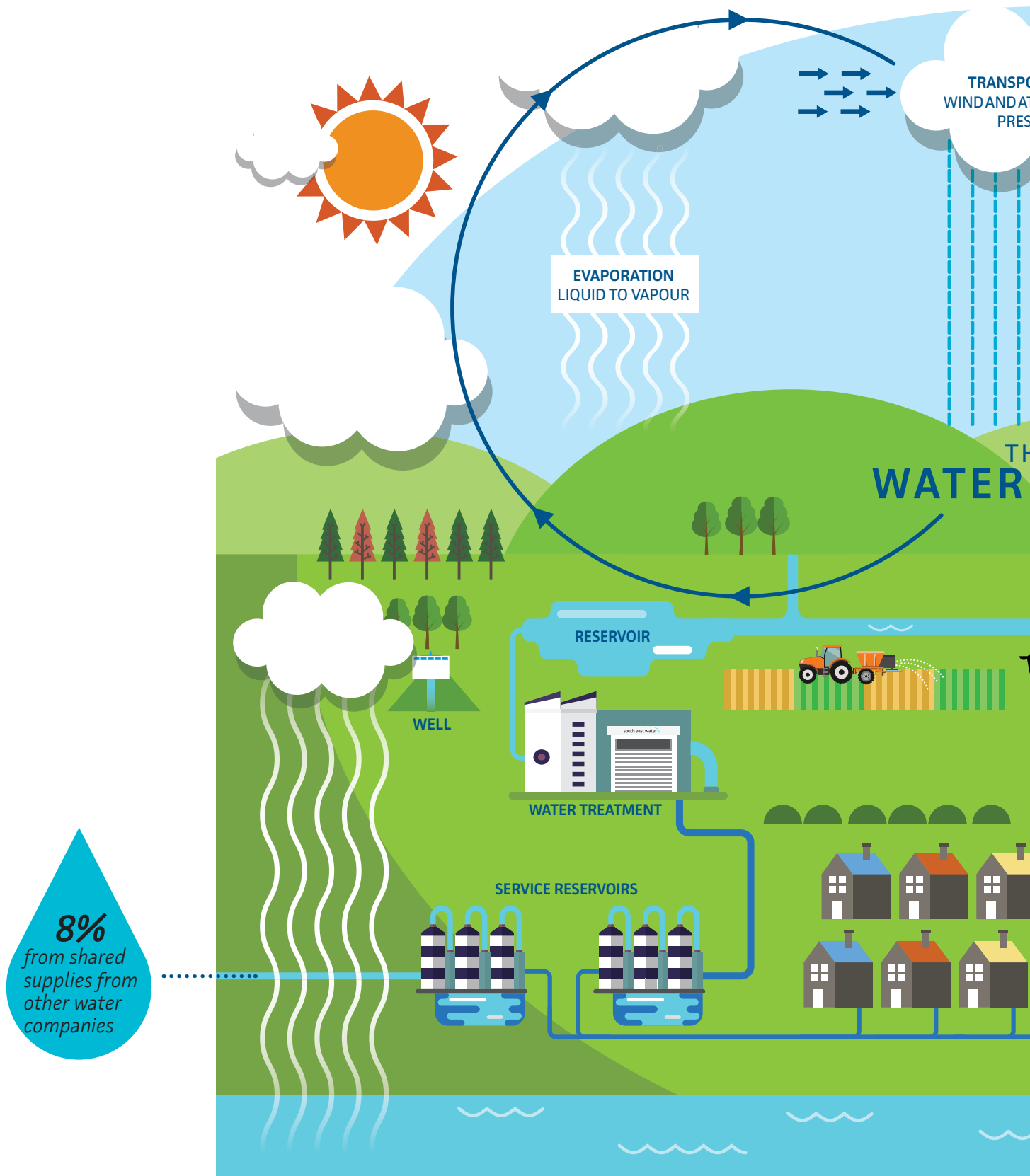
During a drought situation, as well as ensuring enough water for all, we must also do everything we can to protect these natural habitats too.

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



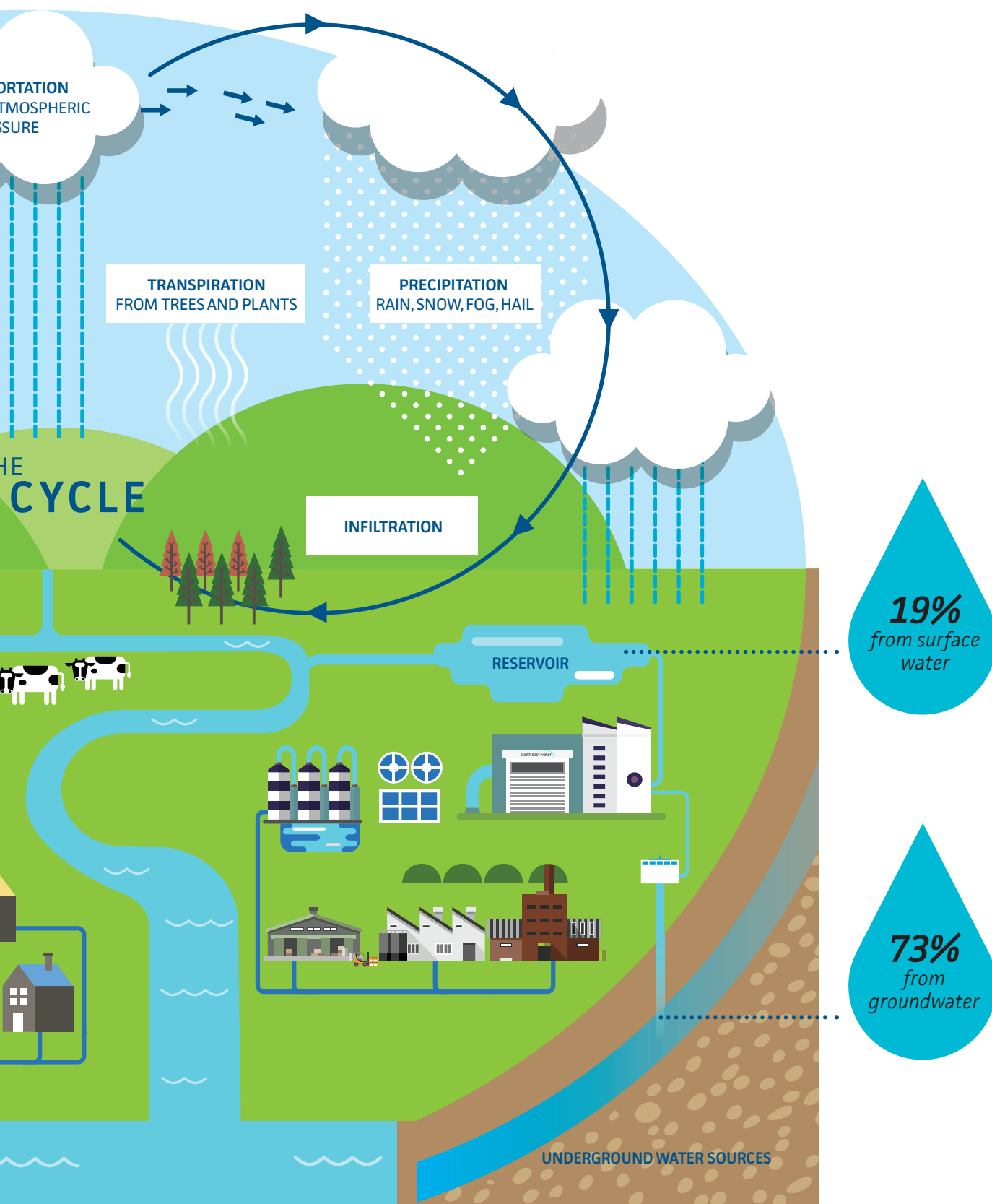
Where our water comes from

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 of water pipes or 9,000 miles.



More than 70 per cent 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, like Bewl Water in Kent, with other water companies.

South East Water carries 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.



Drought triggers

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

We monitor



Groundwater levels and recharge



Rainfall levels



Reservoir stocks



River flows

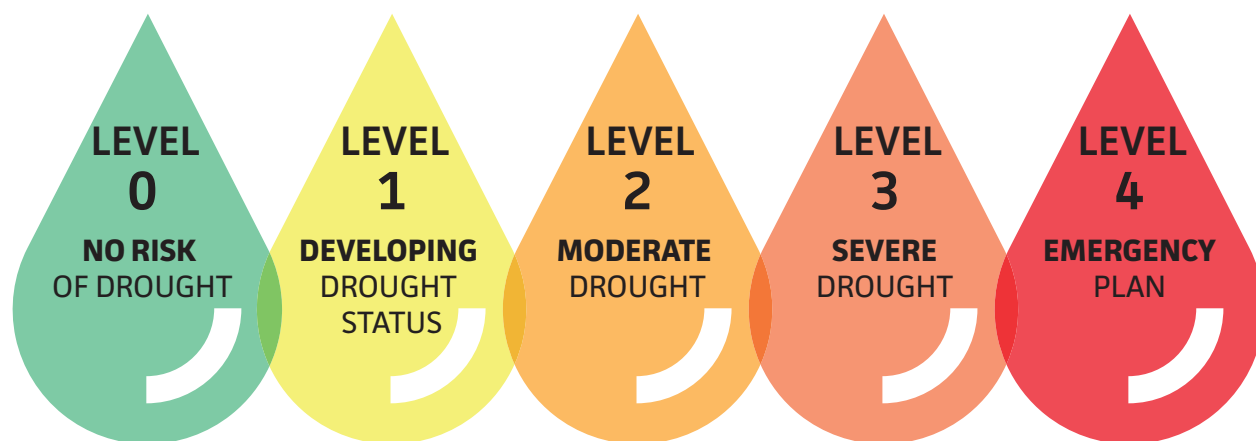


Customer demand for water

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.



A green status indicates that everything is normal and no restrictions are in place. Red indicates the most severe drought stage, and if it continues may need emergency water measures in place.

We also have a 'Post drought' level at the end of a drought. Historical data and previous drought events 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 bursts and promoting water efficiency before considering any formal restrictions to water use, 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 at



southeastwater.co.uk/waterlatest

Action during dry weather and drought

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

Our aim is to create a plan that:

is practical to implement

contains actions that are likely to be temporary

is realistic and technically feasible

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

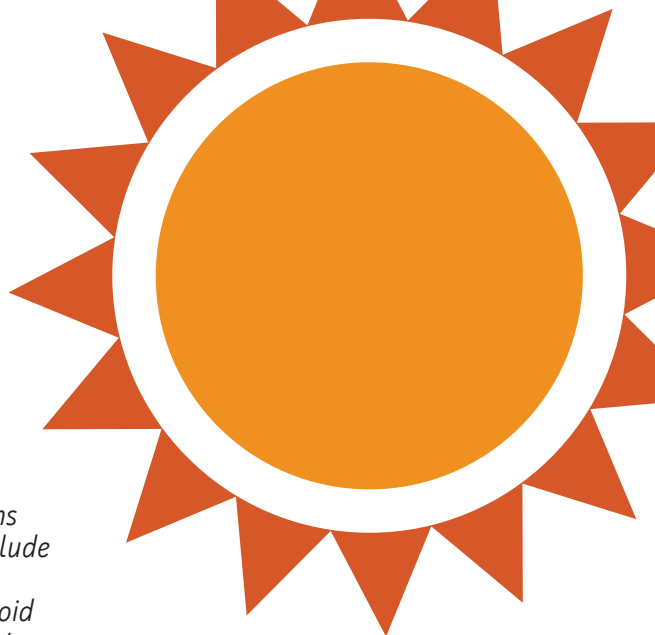
reduce mains water pressure in our pipes

If we are heading to a severe drought (Level 3) we may implement temporary use bans and our actions could 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 Level 3 and Level 4 restrictions or actions, such as asking for permission to take more water than normal from rivers and Level 4 measures (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 ensure 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 event. 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. More information about signing up to our PSR is available on our website at



southeastwater.co.uk/help/priority-services

Everyone can help us during a drought situation.

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



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 ensure 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 initially impose 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:

-  **watering a garden or plants with a hosepipe**
-  **cleaning a private car or leisure boat with a hosepipe**
-  **filling or topping up swimming and paddling pools, ponds and fountains**
-  **cleaning walls, windows, paths, patios and decking with a hosepipe**

These are focussed on water use at home so will affect your colleagues or customers. More details are available in our full Drought Plan or Our Drought Plan magazine for household customers.

We only introduce water use restrictions when they are absolutely necessary and we will consult with our customers before any restrictions start. This will usually be around two weeks before any restrictions apply.

Phase 1 – introduces a ban but with concessions











Phase 2 – concessions are removed

Although this initial action is focussed on water use at home, we will at the same time be asking all businesses and organisations to find ways they can reduce their water use too. Anything you can do at this stage to help will reduce the risk of us needing to apply for a drought order which would restrict non-essential uses of water for businesses too.

Phase 3 and 4 - Drought order

We may apply for a drought order to restrict non-essential uses of water for certain activities if a drought continues and becomes more serious. These will affect businesses and organisations and will only be used if absolutely necessary. We will continue to restrict water use at home during this period.

The drought order would legally restrict the following activities:

-  **watering outdoor plants on commercial premises**
-  **filling or maintaining a non-domestic swimming or paddling pool**
-  **filling or maintaining a pond**
-  **operating a mechanical vehicle-washer**
-  **cleaning any vehicle, boat, aircraft or railway rolling stock**
-  **cleaning non-domestic premises**
-  **cleaning a window of a non-domestic building**
-  **cleaning industrial plant**
-  **suppressing dust**
-  **operating cisterns**

We would only apply for a drought order to restrict non-essential uses of water after implementation of the full suite of temporary water use restrictions at home, including removing all concessions.

Once granted, the drought order can last up to six months, although it can be amended to last up to a total of one year.

We would be likely to apply for drought orders in two steps.

Phase 3 – The first drought order application would be to restrict all 10 of the purposes set out above, with a number of concessions.

Phase 4 – The second drought order application would then remove all of the concessions.

Our full Drought Plan sets out a summary showing the non-essential use restrictions definitions, and exemptions, with estimated savings for the restrictions. If the drought status is severe (or progressing towards severe), we believe we should be enforcing maximum demand restrictions i.e. without any concessions in order to conserve remaining resources.

In practice, Phases 3 and 4 may need to be applied for together if the drought situation looks to be worsening rapidly, because of the 8 to 12 week duration for drought order applications. However, we believe that it is important to be able to have a flexible approach because droughts each have different durations and severities.

We decided not to have one phase of drought order application because if faced with a long duration drought of gradually worsening severity, there could be sufficient time to phase in the drought order restrictions and provide some concession to a small number of specified users for as long a time as possible.

There will be some exemptions due to things like health and safety. More detail is available in our full Drought Plan.

How will I know what's happening?

We try to stay in touch with water users all year round using lots of different media. However, in a drought situation, we use a special communications plan to make sure we communicate the latest drought news and water-saving advice.

As a business you can choose your water retailer. We will keep in close contact with all the water retailers so they can send you the latest information. We will ask them to contact you if we plan to impose restrictions that impact your business.

We will also advertise in local newspapers, via 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 customer queries.

When will restrictions end?

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

Full details about temporary use bans and drought orders can be found in our full Drought Plan 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.

South East Water is 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 situation but we need your help too.

Leaks and bursts

If you spot a leak or a burst pipe while out and about, 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

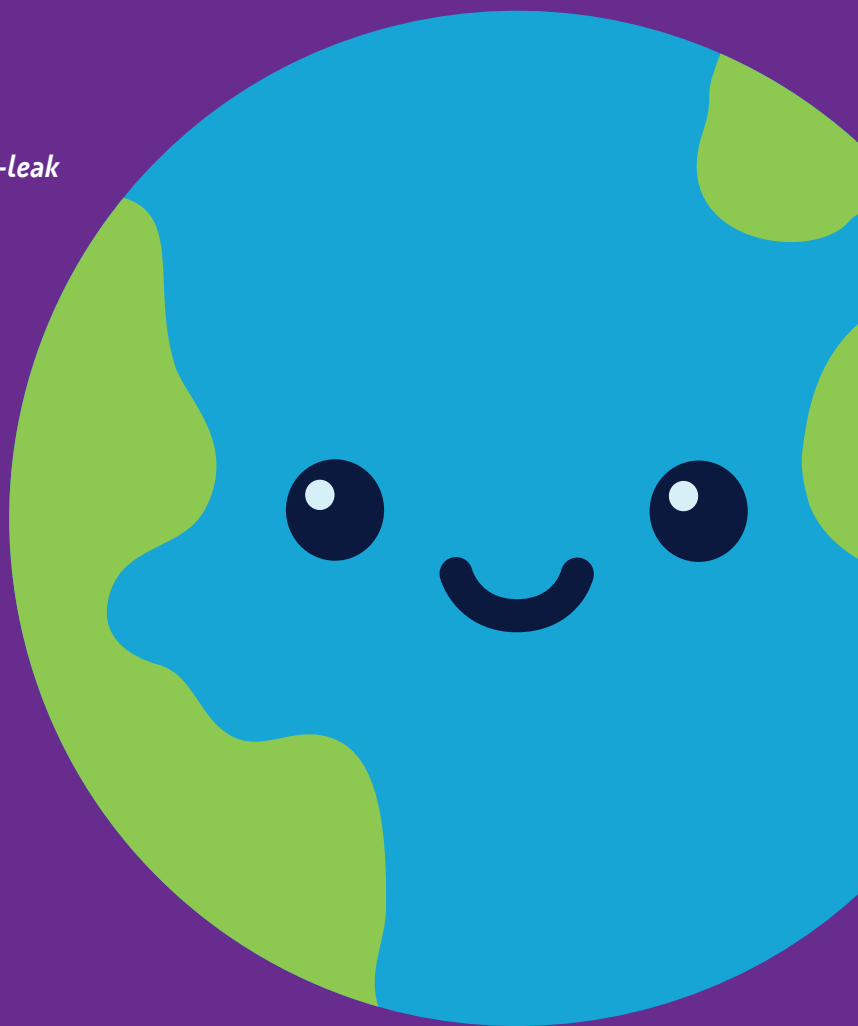
If you spot a leak at work then contact your maintenance team as soon as possible or you may need to contact a qualified plumber. We recommend WaterSafe – a one-stop shop which brings together thousands of qualified plumbers

Visit watersafe.org.uk or call 0333 207 9030.

Use water wisely

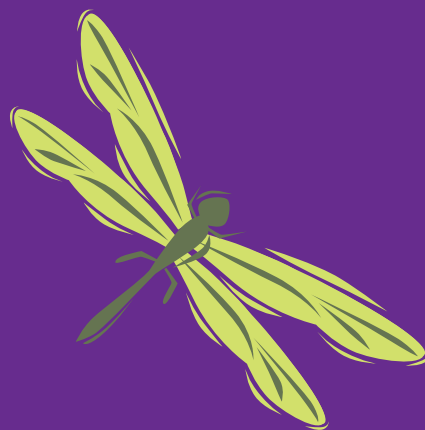
Saving water helps everyone and protects our planet. It also puts us in a better position to cope if we have a water shortage. Using less water now could even help us to avoid some of the restrictions and save your business money on your water bill.

It's a good time for us all to talk to our colleagues and customers about how we can all use water more wisely. Taking action now can help us to protect this precious resource and our environment for generations to come.



More than half of the species that depend on UK rivers, lakes and wetlands are in decline. However, if we all work together to save water, we can help our environment thrive and make sure there's enough for all living creatures.

Did you know?







Your action plan to be water efficient

There are many reasons why you need to make the most efficient and cost effective use of water at your work premises.

The obvious saving is cost as you can save money on your water, water and electricity bills.

But other benefits include:

-  **reducing your carbon footprint**
-  **helping your business to comply with current and future environmental legislation**
-  **improving your company's environmental performance**
-  **generating positive public relations**

First find out how much water you use

As you, along with most business customers, are on a meter, compare summer and winter bills from the past couple of years.

Question to answer:

- **has your water changed?**

If yes why?

- have you increased staff?
- has water using equipment been changed?
- have you replaced facilities such as the staff rest room?



Then carry out an audit of how water is used

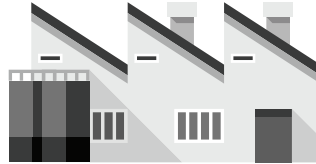
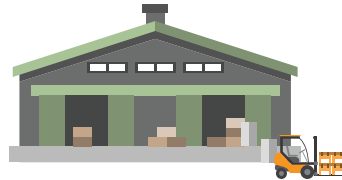
You can use our Water Calculator to give you an insight into your water consumption.

Questions to answer:

- **is water just for staff use in kitchens, showers or toilets or general use?**
 - list how many toilets and how old they are?
 - do urinals have sensor controls or do they flush continually on a timer?
 - how many taps – are they push button, sensor or regular twist?
 - the number of showers?
 - what is the flow rate of the taps and showers?
 - are there any dripping toilets, taps or showers?
- **have you any rainwater harvesting and if so how is this water used?**
- **do you have a process, manufacturing or agricultural water use stream? If so, is it efficient as it could be?**
- **does your site have outside space? How is this watered?**

So how can you make any water efficiency improvements?

- put flush savers into cisterns of old style single flush toilets
- leaks should be fixed immediately
- install push button or sensor taps
- fit sensors to urinals – this is a big water saver
- check to see if an aerated showerhead can be fitted
- display signs or posters encouraging water saving?
- water grounds using rain from a water butt?
Or planted with water efficient plants?



Checking for leaks

If possible, turn off all the taps and other water using appliances on the site and then go and have a look at your water meter. Are the numbers still moving on the display? If they are you may have a leak on your supply pipe. Check for more finding leak tips [here](#)



southeastwater.co.uk/my-water-supply/how-to-check-for-leaks

Are you legal?

You need to make sure that your business premises are compliant with Part G of the Water Fittings regulations. This is a legal requirement. For more details look [here](#)



gov.uk/government/publications/sanitation-hot-water-safety-and-water-efficiency-approved-document-g

There are more ideas of how to save water at work on the Waterwise website [here](#)



waterwise.org.uk/save-water

Looking back

Measure how much water you have saved by comparing bills to what they were before you made the improvements.

Recognition

Say thank you to staff who have helped deliver any savings.

To do list

- ✓ monitor your water use
- ✓ understand your water use
- ✓ check for leaks
- ✓ ensure compliance with Part G of the Water Regulations
- ✓ identify how you can save water
- ✓ implement the practical improvements
- ✓ measure how much water you have saved by comparing meter readings to what they were before you made the improvements
- ✓ say thank you to staff you have helped deliver this saving



Encourage your teams and customers to get involved

Your colleagues or customers may live in our area so sharing advice on how they can save water at home too can make a big difference.

We have lots more advice, top tips and free water-saving devices available through our website and social media channels.

Sharing this information with them is a great way to help demonstrate your business commitment to using water responsibly.

We would love to know what your colleagues, customers and business 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.

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



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

We will use a wide variety of media channels to communicate with you. These will include, 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.

More information about our plans for tackling drought can be found 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

Updated April 2022
NHDP/0422-1