

## Plano strengthens water restrictions

Amy Morenz, Staff writer

(Created: Wednesday, May 24, 2006 1:01 AM CDT)

Plano's 70,000 water customers will be asked to turn off the faucets and get out sprinkler hoses as part of the city's initiation of tighter water rules, which will take effect on June 1.

The new restrictions limit watering to one day per week, based on geographic area. The city has been divided into five zones, with customers in each zone having their own day to water.

Enforcement will start on June 19, under the plan approved by the Plano City Council on Monday. City officials are providing the 18-day grace period because they want users to learn the policies and wean themselves from excessive landscape watering, said Lorrie Reeves, water education coordinator. Residential yards only need one inch of water a week, but may need to be reduced gradually to that level.

Letters explaining the new water rules are being sent this week to all water customers.

The North Texas Municipal Water District and its municipal customers will implement Stage 3 on June 1. A kickoff event in Plano will feature a customer as an example of how watering should occur.

Stage 3 is seen as a severe approach to cut water reduction by 5 percent to avoid Stage 4, an emergency phase targeted toward a 10 percent cutback. Stage 4 would prohibit all residential and commercial watering, except for two hours using a soaker hose or handheld hose to water foundations. Water used for construction would also be controlled.

Plano last faced a water crisis in 1988. The city initiated Stage 2, calling for voluntary drought conservation steps, in January.

Instead of using odd-even addresses for landscape watering, Plano's plan sets specific days when landscape watering can take place between 7 p.m. and 9 a.m. The zones were established to make sure Plano can balance water intake and replenish tanks, said Plano public works director Jimmy Foster.

Plano's conservation efforts also require hand-watering of landscape beds and using soaker hoses to water foundations. The plan prohibits excessive run-off. Pool water can be refilled to stay operational, parks will be irrigated Sunday night and golf course watering restricted to greens and tee boxes.

"I hope we don't have to go into Stage 4," Foster said. "I really would love to have a week or 10 days of heavy rain that fills Lake Lavon."

Crews will patrol the city to look for violators beginning on June 19. The program includes a \$2,000 fine for violators, who could receive a citation for the first offense. Water service could be cut off after the third violation.

The city plans to send details to residential and commercial water customers by the end of week.

The cutbacks are a response to the lack of rainfall hitting Lake Lavon, the source of water to the North Texas Municipal Water District. Lake Lavon has received only 19.45 inches of rainfall, approximately half of its normal amount, since June 2005. The lake's water level is hovering at 484 feet, a critical level, Foster said.

Water customer demands have increased 30 percent in the meantime, district officials say.

The plan could have an impact on the amount Plano pays to purchase water through its "take or pay contract"

with the district, City Manager Tom Muehlenbeck said. The contract requires Plano to pay for water it doesn't use because the fee was based on maximum use. The contract helped the district finance building its plants.

"It doesn't encourage conservation," he said.

For details on the city's watering policies, see [www.planotx.org/water](http://www.planotx.org/water) or call an information hotline at 972-769-4338.

Contact staff writer Amy Morenz at 972-398-4263 or [amy.morenz@sctx.com](mailto:amy.morenz@sctx.com).