



Division of Environmental Health

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State of North Carolina
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Department of Environment and
Natural Resources
William G. Ross, Secretary

MEMORANDUM

To: Environmental Health Directors, Supervisors and Coordinators

From: Larry Michael, Head
Food Protection Branch

Through: Terry L. Pierce, Director

Date: Oct. 18, 2007

Subject: Reducing Water Use in Restaurants

The drought across much of the state is the worst in recorded history. The federal drought map released today showed 71 counties in the mountains and Piedmont are experiencing exceptional drought, and the remaining 29 counties are experiencing extreme or severe drought. With a winter forecast of drier than normal conditions, Governor Easley has asked citizens to save water in every way possible to avoid a water crisis. He has also urged municipalities to ask citizens to stop using water for any purpose that is not essential to public health and safety to save dwindling water supplies.

Since a safe, adequate water supply is needed for food preparation, water conservation guidance must not hinder food safety and measures that protect public health. In previous water emergencies, Orange County Health Department developed the suggestions below for food service establishments, which, if implemented, can reduce water usage while maintaining safe food and protecting the public's health.

1. Check all fixtures for leaks, even if you do not think they are leaking.
2. Check your water supply system for leaks, shutting off any unnecessary flows.
3. Educate your staff about methods of water conservation and ask them for suggestions to help in the conservation efforts.
4. Use brooms rather than water for sweeping outside parking lots.
5. Seek advice from the city water plant regarding low water-using fixtures.
6. When possible, install low-flow aerators on all faucets.
7. Use single-service eating and drinking utensils.
8. Buy ice from commercial ice plants.
9. Purchase drinking water from bottled water plants.
10. Obtain beverages in ready-to-use forms (boxed tea, canned soft drinks, etc.).
11. Wash fresh fruits and vegetables in ponded (standing) water or buy pre-washed, canned or frozen products.
12. Send laundry to a commercial facility.
13. Shut off dipper wells, while storing utensils in product or on a clean surface.
14. Use dry surface cleaning methods, followed by damp mopping or wipes. Do not continue to do flood-type cleaning of floors; use a mop and a bucket.
15. Double-bag garbage, so bags do not break in cans or dumpster.
16. Serve water upon request only.
17. Use refrigeration rather than running water to thaw foods.
18. Before washing dishes, dry-scrape and pre-soak in standing water not under a steady flow of water.
19. Consider using food-grade pan liners, the pan can be used several times between washings on the same day.
20. Switch to ready-to-cook products for items such as biscuits to reduce the number of dirty utensils.
21. Install "pedal-activated" hand sinks, which do not need to run during the entire handwashing process.
22. Switch to vinyl or paper tablecloths and napkins to reduce linen use.

Recognizing that many counties are experiencing extreme drought conditions, you are encouraged to promote the safe and effective water conservation practices listed above in food service establishments, which will not sacrifice proper sanitation measures.

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