

PEPPERELL OUTDOOR WATERING BAN : FAQ'S

I thought the town already had an outdoor watering ban in place?

Pepperell, like most communities, has a standing odd/even outdoor watering ban in effect from April to October each year. In most years, this measure is adequate to allow for unimpeded operation of the municipal water system. The mandatory outdoor ban that is now in place is more stringent and replaces the basic odd/even ban.

Why do we need an outdoor watering ban?

Due to a prolonged drought period, the water levels in the aquifers that supply the town wells have been dropping. This drop is a result of all types of consumption of water, both essential uses as well as non-essential. This drought has also impacted many other communities in the region, with many of them already having instituted similar (or even more severe) water use restrictions. The Pepperell Water Dept (PWD) monitors water levels at our wells daily and based on the trending, has decided that it would be prudent to institute a ban on all non-essential outdoor water use to ensure that the town has an adequate supply of water for essential functions such as drinking, bathing, cooking and fire protection. This ban is effective Monday, August 17th and will remain in effect until further notice.

How long will the ban be in place?

At this point, it is difficult to determine a specific end date. In order to restore the water levels in the aquifers in the short term, there would typically need to be a significant increase in regular precipitation events. The long range weather forecast does not look favorable for this to occur. It should be noted that water levels will tend to rebound a bit in the fall months as outdoor use starts to naturally curtail, peak daily temperatures drop, and precipitation tends to increase. Should PWD feel confident to remove the outdoor watering ban sooner than this fall, residents will be notified via the same channels used to inform them of the ban.

What is a restricted use during the ban?

The purpose of the outdoor watering ban is to remove the added strain of non-essential draws on the towns' water system. Activities such as watering lawns, washing vehicles and equipment, and filling or topping of pools are examples of non-essential uses. Operation of automated irrigation systems is expressly prohibited. There are allowances for activities such as monitored hand-watering of small, private gardens by using hoses or watering cans, albeit on a limited basis, ie, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. Watering activities that are allowed should not be performed between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. to limit evaporation losses. Please note that this is not intended to be an exhaustive list of what is or is not an essential or allowed use, and you are encouraged to contact PWD at water@town.pepperell.ma.us or call 978-433-0359 if you have a specific question.

I have a private well – does the ban apply to me?

PWD does not have authority over private drinking or irrigation wells. With that being said, private wells tend to draw from the same aquifers as the town wells, and we urge residents with private wells to limit their non-essential outdoor water use as well. While the town system utilizes a series of large storage tanks to buffer peak demands, private wells tend to have a limited storage capacity and tend to recharge more slowly than the town facilities.

I water at night, so this shouldn't be a problem, right?

Not necessarily. The town wells tend to run at night when consumption demand and electricity costs are lower. Water is pumped to the town reservoirs for distribution in the system during the normal peak consumption periods. Running a private irrigation system at night is actually in direct competition with the operating the municipal water system.

I'm planning to install a new lawn and/or irrigation system, does the ban apply to me?

Accommodations ***may*** be available depending on the specific circumstances of each situation. Recently installed lawns that are not yet 'established' may be allowed to water on a limited basis until they are established. If you are planning on installing a new lawn and/or irrigation system in the coming weeks, you will ***not*** be allowed to water with an automated system until the ban is removed. Please contact PWD at 978-433-0359 for more guidance.

Are there consequences for violating the ban?

PWD rules and regulations do allow for issuing fines of up to \$500/day for violating the ban; however, the goal is widespread compliance with the ban in order to reduce the burden on the aquifers. Therefore, our first effort is always to contact and work with residents to educate them on the existence and need for the ban. In cases of blatant disregard of the ban, PWD would invoke the more drastic enforcement efforts such as issuing fines. Flagrant and continual violation of the ban may result in termination of water service.

For more information about the outdoor water ban or other water-related issues, please visit us at water@town.pepperell.ma.us.