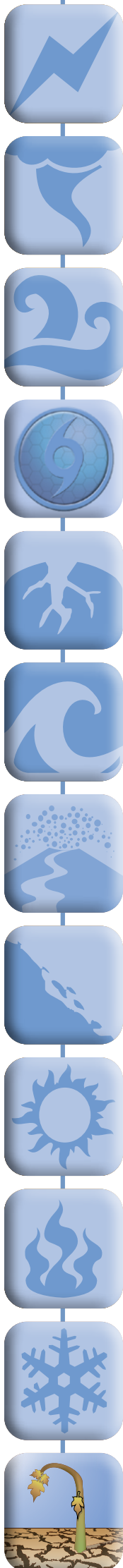




# DROUGHTS



## ? WHAT IS A DROUGHT?

Droughts are periods of abnormally dry weather that persists long enough to produce a serious hydrologic imbalance, causing, for example, crop damage and shortages in the water supply.

Droughts occur throughout the world. In North America, at least one region experiences drought conditions each year. We usually don't think of droughts in the same way as other natural disasters, such as floods or hurricanes. For example, no one knows for sure how severe a drought will be - until the rains return. But droughts can be more costly than other natural disasters.

## KNOW THE TERMS

**Meteorological Drought:** When an area gets less precipitation than normal. Due to climatic differences, what is considered a drought in one location, may not be a drought in another location.

**Agricultural Drought:** When the amount of moisture in the soil no longer meets the needs of a particular crop.

**Hydrological Drought:** When the surface and subsurface water supplies are below normal.

**Socioeconomic Drought:** When water supply is unable to meet human and environmental needs can upset the balance between supply and demand.

**Water Restrictions:** Water conservation actions that may limit hours or prohibit use of water, or require use of hand watering instead of using sprinkler systems.



## ACTIONS TO CONSIDER

### BEFORE

While primarily focusing on water conservation, the actions you can do to protect yourself, your family and your property from the effects of a drought:

- Build or restock your emergency preparedness kit.
- Never pour water down the drain when there may be another use for it.
- Check all plumbing for leaks and have any leaks repaired.
- Choose appliances that are more energy and water efficient.
- Consider purchasing a low-volume toilet that uses less than half the water of older models.
- Replace your showerhead with an ultra-low-flow version.
- Check your well pump periodically; if the automatic pump turns on and off while water is not being used, you have a leak.
- Install irrigation devices that are the most water efficient for each use, such as micro and drip irrigation, and soaker hoses.
- Consider rainwater harvesting.
- Plant native or drought-tolerant grasses, ground covers, shrubs, and trees.
- Check sprinkler systems and timing devices regularly to be sure they operate properly.
- Cover pools and spas to reduce evaporation of water.

### DURING

If prolonged periods of low or zero rainfall were to occur, these are actions you can take to protect yourself, family, and property:

- Always observe state and local restrictions on water use.
- Avoid flushing the toilet unnecessarily.
- Avoid taking baths. Take short showers by turning on water only to get wet and lather and then again to rinse off.
- Place a bucket in the shower to catch excess water for watering plants.
- Operate automatic dishwashers only when fully loaded using the "light wash" feature.



- Hand wash dishes by filling two containers; one with soapy water and the other with rinse water containing a small amount of chlorine bleach.
- Store drinking water in the refrigerator.
- Operate automatic clothes washers only when fully loaded or set the water level for the size of your load.
- Use a commercial car wash that recycles water.
- Avoid over watering your lawn and water only when needed.
- If watering your lawn, do it early in the morning or later in the evening, when temperatures are cooler.
- Water in several short sessions rather than one long one, in order for your lawn to better absorb moisture and avoid runoff.
- Avoid leaving sprinklers or hoses unattended. A garden hose can pour out 600 gallons or more in only a few hours.
- In extreme drought, allow lawns to die in favor of preserving trees and large shrubs.



### DID YOU KNOW...

*Droughts rank second in types of phenomena associated with billion dollar weather disasters during the past three decades. With annual losses nearing \$9 billion per year, drought is a serious hazard with substantial socio-economic risks for the United States.*

Contact your Installation Office of Emergency Management for further information.

