

Water Shortage Plan: Stage III Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Is my water safe right now?

A: At this time, all water produced by Central Iowa Water Works and sold to member agencies is safe to drink and is within the maximum contaminant level of 10mg/l set by the federal Environmental Protection Agency. This mandatory ban is in place to avoid future water rationing and shortages. (June 12, 2025)

Q: Why are nitrates harmful?

A: Water with high nitrate levels exceeding 10 milligrams per liter can cause methemoglobinemia, or blue baby syndrome, in infants under six months of age. Pregnant women should not drink water that exceeds the maximum contaminant level. Contact your healthcare provider or county health department if you have any concerns.

Q: How can I help if I don't have a lawn?

A: Refrain from washing your car, wash only full loads of laundry and dishes, and take shorter showers.

Q: Does this ban apply to businesses?

A: Yes, this ban applies to both commercial and residential customers. Businesses are required to turn off their automated irrigation systems.

Q: Can I still water my flower garden, flowerpots, and vegetable garden?

A: Flower gardens, pots, and vegetable gardens are not included in the ban but should be watered by hand with a hose (or watering can) and only with the least amount of water necessary for plant health.

Q: Can I water my new sod?

A: Sod installed in 2025 can be watered with the least amount of water necessary for plant health. No new sod should be laid until the crisis is over.

Q: How long will the ban on lawn watering last?

A: The ban is a result of demand for treated drinking water outpacing the amount of finished water that can be produced while still meeting the safe drinking water maximum contaminate level of 10mg/l. The timing for when the ban can be lifted depends on several factors including how much nitrate build-up lies in upstream fields, the amount and rate of precipitation, and the temperature.

Q: What should I do if I want to report a violator?

A: Call your local water utility customer service line to report violations.

Q: Can I drink the water if I boil it?

A: Do not boil your water. Boiling water containing high levels of nitrates intensifies the nitrate concentration, making it even more harmful to babies under six months of age, pregnant women, and others who may be health compromised.

Q: What would happen if I chose not to comply?

A: Customers observed watering their lawns in violation of this policy will be notified. If lawn watering is not suspended immediately after the ban is issued, the water service can be terminated with possible fines and fees applied.