

Crisis: Merriam-Webster defines crisis as “an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending; especially: one with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome.”

“California’s Water: A Crisis We Can’t Ignore” is the title of a website from the Association of California Water Agencies that is dedicated to educating Californians about the critical issues surrounding the future of our water supply. Make no mistake, our water supply is in a crisis, true to the definition of the word and it will have a deep impact on everyone who owns, operates or lives in an apartment community. How did we get here and how do we manage our way through it? Hopefully, this article will help you understand the crisis and how we are working to insure our future.

Southern California’s water comes from a variety of sources, each with its own set of problems:

- The Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta is a major source of water for all of California, including the growing population centers in Southern California. More than 25 million people and 2.5 million acres of farmland receive water from this source through the State Water Project. A deteriorating levee system and a Federal Court order in 2007 protecting the environmental systems of the Delta have led to a reduction of up to one third of the water that is available from the Delta.
- The snowpack in the Coastal Ranges and Southern Sierras serves as a natural water storage system for much of the State. In addition to a prolonged drought, recent climate changes have resulted in more of our annual precipitation falling as rain instead of snow. Without adequate man-made storage facilities, much of this rainfall goes uncaptured and also increases the possibility of damaging floods. Snowmelt has offered us a natural, slow release of water during the dry summer months and this is changing.
- The Colorado River Aqueduct delivers water from the Colorado River to Southern California. The Colorado River is facing competing demands from Utah, New Mexico, Wyoming, Colorado, Southern California, Nevada, Arizona, thirty Indian tribes and Mexico and all are fighting to preserve their rights to this declining resource.
- Groundwater also serves a major role in providing water for Californians. In normal years, about thirty percent of the state’s water comes from underground reservoirs, known as aquifers. During drought years, as much as sixty percent of the water may come from this source.

Within Southern California, the amount of water coming from these sources varies by locality. An excellent resource for learning about water sources for different areas of Southern California is the Water Education Foundation's guide at <http://www.water-ed.org/watersources>. The Long Beach area gets water from three main sources—the Delta, the Colorado River, and local groundwater sources. About thirty-eight percent of Long Beach water comes from local groundwater, originating in the San Gabriel Mountains. Forty-two percent comes from the Delta, purchased from the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. Six percent is from reclaimed water that is treated at the Los Angeles County Long Beach Reclamation Plant.

Obviously, Long Beach is directly impacted by reductions in water supplies from the Delta and the reduced snowpack in the San Gabriel Mountains. The Long Beach Water District has been working on this problem for decades. Although population in the Long Beach area has increased twenty-five percent since the mid 1980s, LBWD's dependence on imported water has actually decreased ten percent over the same period. In addition to an aggressive water conservation program for the last fifteen years, reclamation also plays a major role, especially for irrigation purposes. With an eye to securing an independent supply by 2030, LBWD has partnered with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to build the nation's largest desalinization plant.

Changing the way we use water is an essential part of today's water policies and that change is being brought about in several ways.

•**Rates.** Increased charges for water and sewer not only reflect the higher cost of water supply and the cost of replacing aging infrastructure, but are also an effective means of reducing the demand for water. Most water providers in California have replaced their simple flat rate billing systems with tiered systems that progressively penalize customers that use more water. Understand your rate structure, monitor your usage and save money.

•**Regulation.** As the crisis has grown, many conservation efforts have changed from voluntary participation to mandatory regulation. The following rules are currently in effect in Long Beach and you may face stiff penalties for failing to comply.

?Washing driveways, sidewalks, gutters, streets and other pavement with a garden hose, unless using water-conserving pressurized cleaning device, is now prohibited in the City of

Long Beach.

- Over-watering landscapes to the point of causing run-off is prohibited.
- Irrigating any landscaped area with potable water between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:00p.m. is prohibited.
- Irrigating landscapes more than ten minutes per day, on other than Monday, Thursday or Saturday is prohibited.
- Rebates.** There are many programs available through local agencies that are designed to help you upgrade and become more efficient in your water use.
- Installing High-Efficiency Toilets can earn rebates as high as \$165
- Replacing washing machines can be worth as much as \$135 or more
- Upgrading irrigation systems and controllers can get you a rebate of as much as \$630 or more per acre
- Switching to more efficient sprinkler heads can be done with rebates as much as \$13 per head. To find the specifics about these rebate programs, contact the water district or visit them online at [www.lbwater.org](http://www.lbwater.org) and [www.mwdsaveabuck.com](http://www.mwdsaveabuck.com).
- Recover.** A third party utility billing program, where your residents are billed for their water, not only protects the apartment owner from rising utility costs but also encourages the resident to conserve water to save money.

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Remember, the definition of a crisis is an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending. How that change impacts you and your business is really up to you.

Helpful internet sites for more information:

California Water Crisis Website - [www.calwatercrisis.org](http://www.calwatercrisis.org)

Aquaforia – [www.aquaforia.com](http://www.aquaforia.com)

Metropolitan Water District – [www.mwdh20.com](http://www.mwdh20.com)

Be WaterWise – [www.bewaterwise.com](http://www.bewaterwise.com)

Long Beach Water District – [www.lbwater.org](http://www.lbwater.org)

Water Education Foundation – [www.water-ed.org](http://www.water-ed.org)

H2ouse Water Saver Home – [www.h2ouse.org](http://www.h2ouse.org)