



Lehigh County Authority

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DECEMBER 2016 CUSTOMER NEWS & UPDATES

Hot Topic # 1: Drought & Water Supply Update

In November, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) declared a Drought Warning for most areas of eastern Pennsylvania, including Lehigh and Northampton counties, due to prolonged dry conditions across the state and precipitation well below normal. Visit www.lehighcountyauthority.org for updates!

What is a Drought Warning? This DEP declaration is the second stage of drought declarations, which calls for a voluntary reduction in water use by all customers of 10-15 percent. **See reverse for LCA's Winter Water Conservation Guide.**

How are LCA's water supplies holding up? Despite a very hot, dry summer, our water supplies continue to be adequate to meet the needs of the community. However, we need rain/snow to maintain a normal supply, and your help in conserving water where possible is appreciated!

What about the Little Lehigh Creek? Water flows in the Little Lehigh Creek have been declining all year due to the drought. Just before Thanksgiving, two sections of the creek went completely dry, but normal flows resumed downstream. While this is quite distressing to see, it is important to note that the Little Lehigh Creek has a long history of "losing water" in certain stretches of the creek as water goes underground into the local groundwater supply. Rains in late November quickly replenished the stream, but we will continue to monitor conditions and post updates online.

Hot Topic # 2: Sewer Overflows in our Region

When it rains very heavily, water gets into our sanitary sewer lines, which are designed to transport sewage from homes and businesses. Rainwater can enter the system through manhole covers and cracked/broken sewer lines. A lot of that rainwater also comes from homes that have unauthorized connections to the system, such as sump pumps, roof downspouts and floor drains!

When it rains, the extra flow overwhelms the pipes and the sewage treatment plant in Allentown. When there's too much sewage for the plant to process, the untreated sewage is released into our waterways.

LCA is one of 12 municipalities, including the City of Allentown and all the townships and boroughs that are connected to the sewer system in our area, that are named by the USEPA in an Administrative Order to eliminate these sanitary sewer overflows.

What We're Doing: LCA is collaborating with the City of Allentown and all municipalities to develop solutions to eliminate the overflow of sewage into our waterways. During the next several years, we will be working on major



projects to prevent rainwater from entering our sewer pipes. That will reduce the flow to Allentown and help stop the overflows.

Also, starting in 2017, all communities that direct sewage to the Allentown plant will be sharing the costs of new or upgraded regional pump stations, parallel sewer interceptors and flow equalization (storage) tanks that will help prevent our sewage from overflowing.

It's a big job. There are more than 600 miles of sewer pipe in Lehigh County that are impacted, and each municipality needs to conduct work within their own systems. LCA will take care of the regional system of pipes that interconnects them. The City of Allentown will be working with LCA on improvements in the City and at the wastewater plant downtown. Altogether, it's a big job that will take approximately \$400 million to complete over the next 40 years. But it needs to be done, and LCA is leading efforts to ensure we are all working together toward the same goals.

Learn More: Some communities have joined together to form a new website about this program, rainstormready.com, where you will soon be able to read more about the situation, what we're doing to solve it and how you can help.

Winter Water Conservation Guide – Lehigh County Authority

Many people think they can only conserve water in the summer by cutting back on lawn watering or car washing. Sure, saving water in the winter is more difficult, but here are some ideas that work:

- Turn the faucet off while brushing teeth – use a small cup of water to rinse instead.
- When cleaning vegetables, shaving, etc., fill a sink partially with water instead of letting the faucet run.
- Take short showers instead of baths. Turn off the water while soaping or shampooing.
- Don't use the toilet as a trashcan. Flush only when needed (e.g. not every time you "go"!)
- Refrigerate water to drink instead of letting a faucet flow until the water is cold.
- When washing dishes by hand, don't leave the faucet flowing for rinsing. If using a dishwasher, scrape your dishes with a spatula before putting them in the dishwasher instead of pre-rinsing them.
- When doing dishes and laundry, combine loads into fewer, larger loads.
- Find and fix leaks! Pay attention to your toilets, which are the Number 1 culprit of "silent leaks" in the home. Test out your toilet by placing a few drops of food coloring in the back of the toilet tank – wait 15-30 minutes and then look in the toilet bowl. If you have colored water in the bowl, you have a leak!

What's Your Water Footprint?

One of the best ways to find out how you can save water, is to understand how much you actually use! To do this, you can read your water meter (usually located in your basement near your water heater) at the same time each day to learn how much water you typically use each day. Most households use about 200 gallons per day – how about your household?

Once you know how much water you use each day, the next step is to figure out where all that water is going. The calculator below is a simple way to do the math. To use it, you will need everyone who uses water in your household to help you record how much water they use. Make it easy by leaving a log-sheet in each room and ask everyone to record their water usage for a couple of days, or a week.

You can use this calculator simply by recording how often each fixture is used and for how long, or you can get more detailed by calculating how much water is used by each plumbing fixture. But even if you don't know how much water is used by each fixture, the important thing is to learn where the water is being used most often inside your home, and then cut back!

Water Uses	A. Gallons per Use	B. How Many Uses?	Total (A x B)
Toilet Flushing			
Bathing & Showering			
Cooking			
Cleaning			
Washing Dishes			
Laundry			
Car Wash			
Other:			
Total Water Usage (add it up!):			