

DENVER - Watering restrictions begin today for Colorado's largest water utility.

Denver Water declared a Stage 2 drought last month and issued mandatory watering restrictions starting April 1.

"The last time we declared a Stage 2 drought was in 2002," said Greg Austin, president of the Denver Board of Water Commissioners. "We are facing a more serious drought now than we faced then."

"Because of the dry conditions, our reservoirs haven't been full since July 2011," said Jim Lochhead, CEO/manager of Denver Water. "We would need about 7 feet of additional snow in the mountains by late April to get us close to where we should be."

Watering schedule:

- Single-family residential properties with addresses ending in even numbers: Sunday, Thursday
- Single-family residential properties with addresses ending in odd numbers: Saturday, Wednesday
- All other properties (multi-family, HOAs, commercial, industrial, government): Tuesday, Friday

Additional rules:

- Do not water lawns between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.
- Do not waste water by allowing it to pool in gutters, streets and alleys.
- Do not waste water by letting it spray on concrete and asphalt.
- Repair leaking sprinkler systems within 10 days.
- Do not water while it is raining or during high winds.

Denver Water's board said it also issued a drought pricing structure to encourage customers to use less water and help reduce revenue loss. Increases will appear on bills on or after June 1. The drought pricing will remain in effect until the mandatory restrictions are lifted, officials said.

Denver Water said the average summer bill for a single family residential customer who doesn't use less water would increase about \$6 a month. Denver Water said most residential customers who significantly reduce their water use will see a reduction in their bill in comparison to normal usage at 2013 rates.

"Because our primary goal is to ensure water is available for health and safety needs, the first 6,000 gallons of monthly water use will not be subject to drought pricing," said Lochhead.

A drought patrol will be out enforcing the rules. After an initial warning, fines will start at \$250 for violations.