

Daily News (Bowling Green, KY)

County, city issue alert on water shortage As Barren River's flow hits record low, officials call on public to stop using water outside of homes

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Dry conditions have led Bowling Green and Warren County to jointly issue a water shortage alert limiting outdoor water use.

Barren River is at **record low flow**, said Miles McDaniel, spokesman for Bowling Green Municipal Utilities.

The water **flow** is 59 cubic feet per second at the water treatment plant, while in an average year the **river** would be at 700 to 800 cubic feet per second, said John Schubart, manager of engineering for the Warren County Water District.

The **river** has only been at levels near this **low** twice – in 1988 and in 1954, McDaniel said.

“The **low** levels are because of a combination of dry conditions, high heat and increased water usage,” he said.

The alert went into effect Tuesday and calls for both residential and commercial customers to eliminate the use of treated water outside buildings. These potential uses include, but are not limited to, car washing, driveway washing, filling of swimming pools, use and filling of fountains, and watering of lawns, bushes and trees outside the scheduled times.

Residents with addresses ending in odd numbers can use water outdoors on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, while addresses with even numbers are limited to Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. These restrictions will continue until weather conditions no longer make it necessary.

“The current conditions have forced us to skip the normal first step, which are voluntary restrictions,” Schubart said.

If water **flow** continues to drop, there would be an emergency stage followed by mandatory rationing, he said. Rationing would mean no water for gardens or other uses. Water use would basically be limited to fighting fires and using enough water to keep people and animals alive.

Fire departments and the water district have stopped flushing hydrants as a way to conserve water, Schubart said. The goal at this point is to stop wasting water and reduce usage by 20 percent.

The situation is still a long way from the point where rationing would be necessary, he said.

The **low** water **flow** on the **river** won't affect fire hydrants or the ability to fight fires, Schubart said.

“All our tanks are full and fighting fires is one of our top concerns,” he said.

There are no issues with any of the water systems; this problem is simply an issue with water supply, McDaniel said.

People are being asked not to wash vehicles or equipment. They should also not water down porches or sidewalks, he said. They should cut down those types of use as much as possible.

“Conservation efforts begin with our customers,” McDaniel said. “Our customers can make a difference.”

If someone must wash a vehicle, it’s recommended they use commercial car washes because those facilities recycle some of their water, Schubart said.

In addition to the mandatory usage reductions, people are asked to conserve water as much as possible, McDaniel said. They should run only full loads in dishwashers and washing machines, he said. They would also repair dripping faucets or plumbing fixtures.

Bowling Green Mayor Elaine Walker said the visual of the current **river** level was stunning.

In this area, people are complacent about water usage; it’s not something that’s thought about, unlike in other areas of the country, she said. This area usually has more than enough fresh clean water.

“We’re pretty spoiled,” Walker said. “We need to take a look at every bit of water we use and cut back.”

Simple things like not keeping the water running while putting dishes into the dishwasher or not leaving the water running while brushing your teeth can help, she said.

“People need to do what they can to help conserve,” Walker said.

Anyone who violates the conservation policy can be fined up to \$250. Each day a person is in violation represents a separate offense.

Those fines will be enforced by the Warren County Sheriff’s Department and Bowling Green Police Department, McDaniel said.

Currently, Simpson, **Barren**, Logan, Edmonson and Butler counties have no restrictions on water usage.

Allen County also does not have any restrictions on water use, but because of the hot weather, the county’s senior citizens center is open to those who don’t have air conditioning, said Judge-Executive Bobby Young. People can stay there from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the hottest part of the day.

“We’ve also made arrangements for another building if that one becomes overcrowded,” he said.

— For tips on additional methods to conserve water, visit www.bgmu.com.

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