



Preparing For A Water Shortage

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Our golf facility is very concerned about recent reports of a possible water shortage. What can we do to prepare for such a situation?

Water shortages are an unfortunate reality for some golf facilities, and not just those located in the southwestern U.S. In fact, it is expected that more and more regions of the country and golf facilities will face water shortages and restrictions going forward. Planning and preparation should be a priority, whether a water shortage or



restriction is imminent or not. The priorities should focus on five main areas. The first three are measures that can be taken immediately while the last two involve more long-term planning.

1. Develop a drought-contingency plan: Designate which areas of the course receive the highest priority for irrigation. For example,
 1. putting green complexes;
 2. teeing grounds;
 3. fairway landing zones;
 4. remaining fairway areas;
 5. primary rough;
 6. secondary rough and out-of-play areas;
 7. trees and landscape areas; and
 8. practice range.

The exact order of irrigation priorities may vary slightly at your golf facility. Recommended resource: Developing a Drought-Emergency Plan.

2. Establish a formal Best Management Practices (BMPs) document for irrigation and water use that can be shared with water regulators and golfers with regard to the specific practices employed to maximize water-use efficiency.

Recommended resource: [BMPs for Golf Courses: Template and Guidelines](#)

3. Maximize irrigation system efficiency. Every effort should be made to monitor the efficiency of your irrigation system and make necessary adjustments, including replacing sprinkler nozzles, repairing leaks, adjusting coverage and taking advantage of the latest irrigation technology.

Recommended resource: [Does Your Irrigation System Make the Grade?](#)

4. Turf reduction and turf selection can achieve major water savings for golf facilities. Not every square foot of a golf course needs to be irrigated turf, and some turfgrass species (even varieties within a species) require much less water than others. Playing quality does not have to be compromised with either turf reduction or converting to turfgrasses that use less water.

Recommended resource: [Turf Reduction Template](#)

5. Switch to an alternative water source for golf course irrigation. Potable water, i.e., drinking water, is already a scarce resource in parts of the U.S. and it will only become more expensive and less available to golf facilities going forward. Switching to recycled water (also known as reclaimed or effluent) or other low-quality sources (saline) is an option for some golf facilities. However, there are challenges when using non-potable water on turf so understanding the specifics is important.

For more information, we encourage you to visit the newly-launched [USGA Golf's Use of Water Resource Center](#). Here you will find videos, case studies, frequently asked questions, articles and other resources to help your golf facility make the best use of water. Make sure to check back periodically as content will continue to be added as it is developed.