

How the Water Use Plan Works in Practice

What does it mean when Central Iowa Water Works (CIWW) has entered a “Water Watch” or “Water Alert”?

The CIWW Water Use Plan is more than a policy, it’s a coordinated, step-by-step approach to protecting our region’s water supply. Here’s how it works in real time.

Monitoring Conditions Every Day

CIWW and its operating partners continuously monitor:

- Water demand across the region
- Treatment plant capacity
- Source water quality
- Source water quantity
- System performance and operations

Issues such as demand approaching system limits, or conditions like water quality or supply becoming a concern, prompts CIWW prepares to take action.

Making the Call

When certain thresholds are reached, such as demand nearing 90% of system capacity, CIWW leadership takes measured steps to further evaluate the situation for action.

- Technical experts assess system conditions and make recommendations to the CIWW Board of Trustees for action
- The Board determines whether to activate a stage of the Water Use Plan based on data and real-time system needs
- Actions are then communicated to the region

Communicating Across the Region

Once a stage is declared, communication is immediate and coordinated:

- CIWW issues public guidance through a press release, social media channels and other available platforms
- Member agencies share consistent messaging with customers
- Updates are provided through media, social platforms, and local governments
- Emergency Management partners may assist with public notification

The goal is clear: Everyone receives the same information in a organized, time-sensitive manner.

What It Means for the Public

The actions requested, or required, depend on the stage.

Early Stages (Voluntary):

- Reduce lawn watering by 25% or 50%, based on the need of the situation
- Water only when needed and on designated days
- Fix leaks and avoid unnecessary water use

Later Stages (Mandatory):

- Lawn watering is banned
- High water-use activities may be restricted
- Additional conservation measures may be required

These steps focus on reducing outdoor water use, which can make up a significant portion of peak demand.

Local Implementation

While CIWW sets the regional strategy, local utilities and communities put it into action:

- Customers are notified directly by cities and water providers
- Local rules and enforcement measures may be implemented
- Agencies work with large water users to reduce demand

These steps ensure the plan works effectively at both the regional and local level.

When Enforcement Is Needed

In more severe stages, enforcement may be required to protect the system:

- Warnings or notices may be issued for violations
- Continued noncompliance can result in fines or temporary service interruptions
- Member agencies are also held accountable for implementing required measures

These steps help ensure fairness and effectiveness across the region.

Adjusting as Conditions Change

The Water Use Plan is designed to be flexible.

- CIWW continuously monitors conditions
- Stages can be increased, reduced, or lifted as needed
- Adjustments can be made based on real-time data and system performance

This allows CIWW to respond quickly and appropriately to changing conditions.

A Real-World Example

On a hot, dry summer week, demand may rise quickly due to lawn watering. CIWW may declare a Stage I Water Watch based on technical expert recommendations and the Board's authorization to execute it. This means:

1. Residents are asked to reduce outdoor watering
2. Demand and system performance are monitored
3. Adjustments may be made as conditions improve or worsen

Working Together for Reliable Water

The Water Use Plan is how CIWW ensures that safe, reliable drinking water is available – even during periods of high demand or system stress.

By working together, small changes in water use can have a big impact on the system.

It's a shared effort across communities, utilities, and residents – because when it comes to water, we are truly Stronger Together.