Last May, in response to the drought conditions across North Carolina, Gov. Mike Easley issued Executive Directive No. 12, Non-Essential Water Use. This directive ordered all executive branch agencies in the 12 hardest-hit drought counties in western North Carolina to discontinue all non-essential water use, including washing vehicles, watering for ornamental purposes, watering grass and washing down surfaces such as sidewalks. As the drought worsened in August, Gov. Easley directed state agencies in all 100 counties to stop non-essential water use, and asked all citizens to voluntarily conserve by 20 percent.

The governor today stated that North Carolina is facing a potential water emergency. For example, some communities have as little as a three-month supply available. In addition, he asked us to personally monitor compliance with the order he issued mandating water conservation in all state agencies throughout North Carolina to make sure state government is leading by example. Gov. Easley asked us to write to you to make sure that state government does everything possible to reduce water consumption.

As Gov. Easley said, the drought is no longer an inconvenience but a very serious situation. We ask that you immediately remind all state government employees of the governor’s directive to stop all non-essential water use. Non-essential water uses are defined as those that: do not have any health or safety impacts; are not required by regulation; and are not needed to meet the core functions of the agency.
Examples of non-essential water use include:

- Irrigation of lawns and ornamental plants;
- Washing cars, off-road equipment, and other vehicles unless necessary for operator safety;
- Washing of all building exteriors, outside structures, streets, sidewalks and parking lots;
- Operation of all inside and outside decorative pools and fountains;
- Routine watering of athletic fields;
- Recreational water uses such as swimming pools;
- Dust suppression with water sources other than treated wastewater.

Additional conservation measures that should immediately be employed include:

- Do not operate hoses without hand-operated nozzles;
- Disconnect non-essential ice machines;
- Do not supply tap water at eating establishments unless requested;
- Fix or repair leaks, drips and other water losses;
- Do not wash partial loads in washing machines and dishwashers;
- Do not use hoses for clean up (i.e., do not use hose as a broom), unless required by health code.

The Department of Administration’s Facility Management Division is conducting building-by-building checks to locate and fix any leaks, ensure that water-reducing aerators are in place, and to make certain that flush valves and water pressure gauges are properly set. Agencies occupying leased property and their landlords likewise will be asked to take water conservation measures consistent with state action. Motor Fleet Management has stopped washing state-owned vehicles and vendors have been notified that they will not be reimbursed for unauthorized washing of vehicles statewide.

Please look for additional ways to implement water conservation measures throughout the State Government Complex, on all university and community college campuses, on all leased properties and in our homes and communities. For more information on water conservation, both at work and at home, go to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources Web site under “Current Events” at http://www.enr.state.nc.us/.

We thank you for your commitment to making sure that North Carolina state government is the leader in responding to the drought.

CC:  Gov. Mike Easley  
Executive Mansion  
Governor’s Office