

# Frequently Asked Questions: Drought Surcharge Fee

Who is charged the Drought Surcharge Fee and who is not charged?

The Drought Surcharge Fee is applied to a water customer’s monthly bill if the following two (2) conditions are met:

- 1.) The City declares a Critical Drought Stage (Stages 1 to Stage 5), and
- 2.) Customer’s monthly water use exceeds the Consumption Threshold for the account type. The Consumption Threshold for each account type is shown below in Table 1.

The Drought Surcharge Fee amount for that month’s Critical Drought Stage (Stage 1 to Stage 5) would be charged to every 100 cubic feet (cf) of water used above the Consumption Threshold amount.

Table 1:

Monthly Groundwater Use Surcharge Fees Above Consumption Threshold						
Account Type	Consumption in Cubic Feet (cf)	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Residential	2,500 or more	\$0.25	\$0.50	\$1.25	\$2.00	\$3.00
Commercial & Multi-Family	3,500 or more	\$0.25	\$0.50	\$1.25	\$2.00	\$3.00
Institutional	10,000 or more	\$0.25	\$0.50	\$1.25	\$2.00	\$3.00
Irrigation	1,000 or more	\$0.25	\$0.50	\$1.25	\$2.00	\$3.00

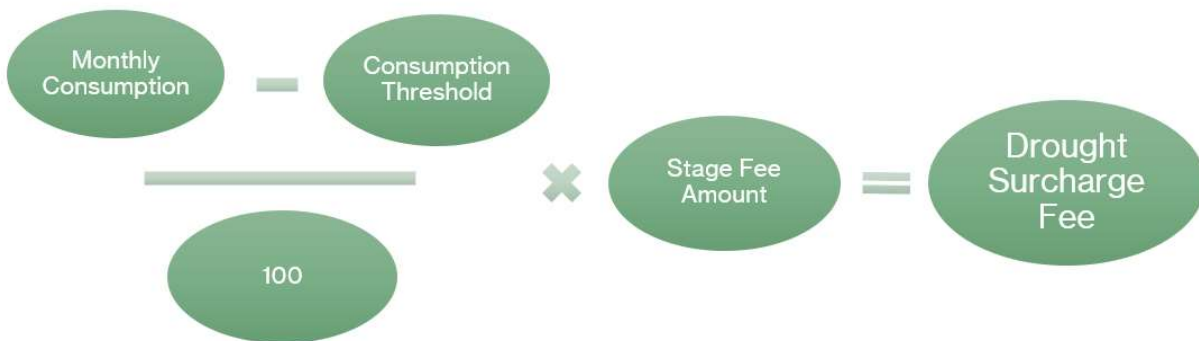
If both conditions mentioned above are not met (the City hasn’t declared a Critical Drought Stage and/or the monthly water use is less than the Consumption Threshold), then the Drought Surcharge Fee would **not** be applied to that month’s bill.

How is the Drought Surcharge Fee calculated?

The Drought Surcharge Fee amount for that month’s Critical Drought Stage (Stage 1 to Stage 5) would be charged to every 100 cubic feet (cf) of water used above the Consumption Threshold amount. For instance, if a Residential customer used 3,000 cf in a month during Stage 3, then they would be charged \$1.25 for the additional 500 cf used over the Residential threshold of 2,500 cf (500cf / 100 X \$1.25 fee), or \$6.25 for the Drought Surcharge Fee.

The fee calculation is shown below in Table 2.

Table 2:



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### When does the Drought Surcharge Fee go into effect?

The fee is effective February 1, 2024. It will begin appearing on monthly water bills beginning in March 2024 (if applicable).

### What if the Critical Drought Stage changes during the billing month? At what stage fee would a customer be charged?

If the Critical Drought Stage changes during the billing month, the rate of the lesser stage would be assessed for that month's Drought Surcharge Fee. In addition, if the City transitions between Stage 0 (no Critical Drought Stage) and Stage 1, the Drought Surcharge Fee would not be assessed for that month.

### Who sets the Critical Drought Stage?

The City of Alamo Heights shall determine when conditions warrant implementation of the groundwater use reduction program. The program is declared when the Edwards Aquifer indicators fall below the trigger levels shown in Table 1. Regardless of the aquifer's level, the City may advance stages as needed to effect compliance with pumping limit goals.

The current Edwards Aquifer conditions and critical stage declared by the Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA) can be found at the EAA website at <https://www.edwardsaquifer.org/>.

### Why would Alamo Heights' water restrictions be different than other area water providers, such as San Antonio Water System (SAWS)?

The Edwards Aquifer is the City's sole source for potable water. As a condition of its agreement with the EAA, the City is mandated to declare a Critical Drought Stage, and meet associated water usage limits, when the condition of the Edwards Aquifer requires it. Other water providers, such as SAWS, may have additional water sources other than the Edwards Aquifer that they may consider when declaring drought stages and setting consumption standards or limits.

### What happens if Alamo Heights uses more water than is permitted by the Edwards Aquifer Authority (EAA)?

In the event a Critical Drought Stage is declared, the City is mandated to reduce the amount of water pumped from the Edwards Aquifer for use by its water customers. If the City exceeds the amount of water it's allowed to pump in a calendar year, then the EAA may impose penalties on the City and its water customers, including but not limited to fines and additional limits on water consumption.

### What if I have additional questions regarding the Drought Surcharge Fee?

If a customer has additional questions regarding the Drought Surcharge Fee, contact the City of Alamo Heights at 210-822-3331.