# Complying with California Water Conservation Mandates



By Joseph DeCarlo, MBA, CPM, CCIM, CRE

Governor Brown signed executive order B-29-15 on April 1, 2015 calling for 25% water reduction due to severe drought conditions. The State Water Resources Control Board ("Water Board") shall be responsible for implementing and monitoring these measures. As landlords, investors, and responsible members of society, we have already taken steps to contribute to the cause. Most apartment building owners already have installed low flush toilets, flow restrictors on showers and faucets and repair plumbing leaks when reported. Unfortunately, most apartments are also master metered for water usage and tenants control internal water usage. How can landlords make Tenants see that they need to use less water when the Tenants are not the ones responsible for paying for the water?

In this article we will examine ways to conserve outside and internal water usage and the penalties for over use if your apartment building exceeds the quota imposed by the Water Board. Also, we will discuss separate water metering and RUBS (Ratio Utility Billing System). It may be time for the laws to changes along with the times. It may be time for the state to require landlords to charge their Tenants for their water usage based on the number of occupants in a unit.

## **Back Ground Information**

Most apartment buildings have a single master water meter(s) as local water companies prefer to send a single, large water bill to the owner of the building. Sub-metering units is very expensive and was viewed as impractical. Some landlords have sub-metered their units using electronic sensors on intake lines. In most systems, one sensor is required for the hot water line and another sensor is needed for the cold water line. It is costly and not usually used except for large complexes.

Another method is RUBS (Ratio Utility Billing System). RUBS is a method of calculating a Tenant's

utility bill based on occupancy, apartment square footage, number of bedrooms, or some other combination of factors A Tenant's usage is usually limited to indoor use such as laundry, dishes, showers, toilets, but some units may have outdoor landscaping that is included. For example, one hundred unit apartment building, all two bedroom units and water bill is \$5,000 so each individual tenant would owe one percent or \$50.00 dollars that would be in addition to monthly rent. This method is used by large complexes but not usually by small owners and this will change with much higher water bills. Usually use an outside company to do the billing and collecting. RUBS can also include other utility costs.

## Average Indoor Water Usage

The average indoor usage of family of five is 292 gallons per day and outdoor use is 122 gallons per day. Showering, toilet flushing and washing machine are largest users. This is 414 gallons per day or 12,422 gallons per month. Reviewing monthly water bills for comparison with previous months using excel spreadsheet would be good water management tool.

### Water Saving Methods

- 1. Replace existing toilets with 1.6 GPF (check if rebate is available).
- 2. Replace lawns with synthetic grass, colored pavers or rock. Synthetic grass cost approximately \$2.00 per square foot and another \$3.00 to install. Many local water companies offer \$2.00 per S.F. rebate but you need to apply before starting work and have pictures and drawings before and after. Also note that you should wait until you receive written approval before starting your replacement.
- Check outside and inside the apartment unit for plumbing leaks (faucets, toilets) every few months. Document these leaks and when they were repaired.
- 4. Water lawns at night only twice a week and add drought resistant landscaping that uses less water and check and repair sprinkler leaks. Monitor the watering to ensure that there is no runoff. Be careful as most cities have started a water waste hotline that permits neighbors to make complaints against each other.

- 5. Use brooms to sweep or blowers instead of water hose to wash down outside areas.
- 6. Disconnect outside hose bibs so tenants cannot wash cars.
- 7. Make sure faucets and shower heads have flow restrictors.
- Make sure dishwasher and washing machines have full loads.
- 9. Send letter to tenants with these and other suggestions to get them to conserve water.

#### Water Rates and Penalties

Water companies are flooding your mail with media related to water conservation, but are starved for additional revenue. Pay careful attention to your most recent water bills and compare them with the bills you received last year. You may be shocked to find that you have already used less water this year and are still paying almost the same amount as last year. This is due to the rates already being adjusted. Be aware that certain districts may install flow restrictors on main water lines while imposing stiff fines on customers who are determined to be using "excess amounts of water". It is safe to say that the higher water rates are here to stay, even if the draught does not.

In conclusion, this water shortage is a long term crisis. And water rates will continue to escalate. Landlords must change and adapt in order to maintain a reasonable rate of return on their investment. Landlords must also find ways to educate their Tenants in the subject of water conservation while finding a way to reasonable charge the tenants for their utility usage. The RUBS may be the most promising tool to help accomplish that goal. The RUBS, additional education for the Tenants, and a great maintenance team can help keep an investment in a positive cash flow state while still being efficient in its utility usage, especially water.

Anoperty Address:	Street	Gity		State		
	Stient	uty		30318	Zр	
Property Type (circle	ane): Apartments	Shopping Center	SFIE	Office	HDA	Industrial
Water District:						
irans Area (SF) Water	ed:		Plant/Plante	r Area(s) (SF) W	stered:	
prie 1s		SF				
prie 3 s		5F				SF
uri Rebute (if Availab 5 v 33	fie]: 2. DD/uf =					
	a. triju: -					
otestial Plumbias La	aks Checked and Repairs	dlac				
second of the second gives	Date Repaire					
AP off outside notice	s to prevent car washing	and excess statering [circ	de ora) YES	NO		
ater Use History:						
Month	Days	Billing Units	Gallorn (g	A A	verage GPD	Total Bill
				-   -		
Planbing w Landscaper	to perform sprinkler mai	lection services in each u ritenance to fix any leaks		en.		
Plumbing w Landscaper Cap off any	endor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai sprinkler sections detem	intenance to fix any leaks ni ned to be wasteful.	in sprinkler syste	en.		
Plumbing w Landscaper Cap off any Determine	endor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai sprinkler sections determ cost of tarf reduction and	intenance to fix any leaks	in sprinkler syste iai turf.	ers.		
Plumbing w Landscaper Cap off any Determine Determine	endor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai sprinkler sections determ cost of tarf reduction and cost of tarf reduction and	intenance to fix any leaks ni ned to be wasteful d replacement with artific	in sprinkler syste iai turf.	HEI.		
Plumbing w Landscaper Cap off any Determine Determine	endor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai sprinkler sections determ cost of tarf reduction and cost of tarf reduction and TION FOR PROPERTY:	intenance to fix any leaks nined to be wasteful I replacement with artific I replacement with paving	in sprinkler syste ial turf. gatoren.	HTI.		
Plumbing w Landscaper Cap off any Determine Determine OPOSED PLAN OF AC Plumbing w	indor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai sprinkler sections detem cost of farf reduction and cost of farf reduction and CTON FOR PROPERTY: indor to perform leak de	intenance to fix any leaks ni ned to be wasteful d replacement with artific	in sprinkler syste islituet gatores. rift.			
Plumbing w Landscaper Cap off any Determine Determine Determine Plumbing w Landscaper Cap off any	inder to perform leak de to perform uprisitier mai apprivitier ucclicans deteem cost of tarf reduction and cost of tarf reduction and CTON FOR PROPERTY: inder to perform leak de to perform uprisitier mai to perform uprisitier mai	intenance to fix any leaks intend to be wanteful, d replacement with artific d replacement with paving fection services in each u intenance to fix any leaks ni sed to be wanteful.	in sprinkler syste sei turt, gatoren, nit, in sprinkler syste			·
Plumbing w Landscaper Cap off any Determine Determine IDPOSED PLAN OF AG Plumbing w Landscaper Cap off any Determine	endor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai portikler tections determ costs of tarf nedaction and costs of tarf nedaction and <b>TRON POR PROPERTY:</b> indor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai sprinkler sections determ costs of tarf nedaction and	Intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful. In replacement with artific a replacement with paying fection services in each us intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful.	in sprinkler systs iai turt, gatores, nit, in sprinkler syste iai turt,			
Plumbing w Landscaper Cap off any Determine Determine IDPOSED PLAN OF AG Plumbing w Landscaper Cap off any Determine	endor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai portikler tections determ costs of tarf nedaction and costs of tarf nedaction and <b>TRON POR PROPERTY:</b> indor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai sprinkler sections determ costs of tarf nedaction and	intenance to fix any leaks intend to be wanteful, d replacement with artific d replacement with paving fection services in each u intenance to fix any leaks ni sed to be wanteful.	in sprinkler systs iai turt, gatores, nit, in sprinkler syste iai turt,			
Planbing w Landscaper Cap off any Determine Determine Planbing w Landscaper Cap off any Determine Determine	endor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai portikler tections determ costs of tarf nedaction and costs of tarf nedaction and <b>TRON POR PROPERTY:</b> indor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai sprinkler sections determ costs of tarf nedaction and	Intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful. In replacement with artific a replacement with paying fection services in each us intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful.	in sprinkler systs iai turt, gatores, nit, in sprinkler syste iai turt,			
Planbing w Landboaper Cap off any Determine Determine Planbing w Landboaper Cap off any Determine Determine	endor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai portikler tections determ costs of tarf nedaction and costs of tarf nedaction and <b>TRON POR PROPERTY:</b> indor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai sprinkler sections determ costs of tarf nedaction and	Intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful. In replacement with artific a replacement with paying fection services in each us intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful.	in sprinkler systs iai turt, gatores, nit, in sprinkler syste iai turt,			
Planbing w Landboaper Cap off any Determine Determine Planbing w Landboaper Cap off any Determine Determine	endor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai portikler tections determ costs of tarf nedaction and costs of tarf nedaction and <b>TRON POR PROPERTY:</b> indor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai sprinkler sections determ costs of tarf nedaction and	Intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful. In replacement with artific a replacement with paying fection services in each us intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful.	in sprinkler systs iai turt, gatores, nit, in sprinkler syste iai turt,			
Planbing w Landboaper Cap off any Determine Determine Planbing w Landboaper Cap off any Determine Determine	endor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai portikler tections determ costs of tarf nedaction and costs of tarf nedaction and <b>TRON POR PROPERTY:</b> indor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai sprinkler sections determ costs of tarf nedaction and	Intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful. In replacement with artific a replacement with paying fection services in each us intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful.	in sprinkler systs iai turt, gatores, nit, in sprinkler syste iai turt,			
Planbing w Landboaper Cap off any Determine Determine Planbing w Landboaper Cap off any Determine Determine	endor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai portikler tections determ costs of tarf nedaction and costs of tarf nedaction and <b>TRON POR PROPERTY:</b> indor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai sprinkler sections determ costs of tarf nedaction and	Intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful. In replacement with artific a replacement with paying fection services in each us intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful.	in sprinkler systs iai turt, gatores, nit, in sprinkler syste iai turt,			
Planbing w Landboaper Cap off any Determine Determine Planbing w Landboaper Cap off any Determine Determine	endor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai portikler tections determ costs of tarf nedaction and costs of tarf nedaction and <b>TRON POR PROPERTY:</b> indor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai sprinkler sections determ costs of tarf nedaction and	Intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful. In replacement with artific a replacement with paying fection services in each us intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful.	in sprinkler systs iai turt, gatores, nit, in sprinkler syste iai turt,			
Planbing w Landscaper Cap off any Determine Determine Planbing w Landscaper Cap off any Determine Determine	endor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai portikler tections determ costs of tarf nedaction and costs of tarf nedaction and <b>TRON POR PROPERTY:</b> indor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai sprinkler sections determ costs of tarf nedaction and	Intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful. In replacement with artific a replacement with paying fection services in each us intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful.	in sprinkler systs iai turt, gatores, nit, in sprinkler syste iai turt,			
Planbing w Landscaper Cap off any Determine Determine Planbing w Landscaper Cap off any Determine Determine	endor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai portikler tections determ costs of tarf nedaction and costs of tarf nedaction and <b>TRON POR PROPERTY:</b> indor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai sprinkler sections determ costs of tarf nedaction and	Intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful. In replacement with artific a replacement with paying fection services in each us intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful.	in sprinkler systs iai turt, gatores, nit, in sprinkler syste iai turt,			
Planbing w Landboaper Cap off any Determine Determine Planbing w Landboaper Cap off any Determine Determine	endor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai portikler tections determ costs of tarf nedaction and costs of tarf nedaction and <b>TRON POR PROPERTY:</b> indor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai sprinkler sections determ costs of tarf nedaction and	Intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful. In replacement with artific a replacement with paying fection services in each us intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful.	in sprinkler systs iai turt, gatores, nit, in sprinkler syste iai turt,			
Planbing w Landboaper Cap off any Determine Determine Planbing w Landboaper Cap off any Determine Determine	endor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai portikler tections determ costs of tarf nedaction and costs of tarf nedaction and <b>TRON POR PROPERTY:</b> indor to perform leak de to perform sprinkler mai sprinkler sections determ costs of tarf nedaction and	Intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful. In replacement with artific a replacement with paying fection services in each us intervance to fix any leaks in red to be wanteful.	in sprinkler systs iai turt, gatores, nit, in sprinkler syste iai turt,			
Plumbing w Landscaper Gag off any Determine Determine Determine Cag off any Determine Determine Determine Determine	while to perform that is a benefamin periodia weaking device and the second that meta- cold that meta-too and out of that meta-too and out of that meta-too and the meta-too and the second term too and the second term periodia vectors device and periodia vectors device and that meta-too and the meta-too and periodia vectors device and that meta-too and that meta-too and the meta-too and the meta-too and the meta-too and the meta-too and the meta-too a	relevance to the way leads in red to be wanted at replacement with miting tections remain a star of the second tections remains to the wanted to tections remains to the wanted to the second tection and the second tections remains the second tection is replacement with pairing replacement with pairing	in sprinkler syste keitaat gatorees. nitt. in sprinkler syste kaitaat gatorees.	er.		Dates
Pluztikaj w Landscaper Cap off any Determine Obtermine Plustika Pluztikaj w Landscape Cap off any Cap off any Determine Obtermine	while to perform that is a benefamin periodia weaking device and the second that meta- cold that meta-too and out of that meta-too and out of that meta-too and the meta-too and the second term too and the second term periodia vectors device and periodia vectors device and that meta-too and the meta-too and periodia vectors device and that meta-too and that meta-too and the meta-too and the meta-too and the meta-too and the meta-too and the meta-too a	interaction to the any related trappice news with artificing implementation with particle interactions in the party interactions with the party interaction is the any relation interaction of the any relation of the any relation of the any relation of the any relation of the any relation of the any relation interaction of the any relation of the any relation of the any relation interaction of the any relation of the any relation of the any relation interaction of the any relation of the any relation of the any relation interaction of the any relation of	in sprinkler syste keitaat gatorees. nitt. in sprinkler syste kaitaat gatorees.	es.		