

Restriction on the Irrigation of Nonfunctional Turf for Commercial Customers

Assembly Bill 1572: Nonfunctional Turf Irrigation Restrictions

In fall of 2023, [Assembly Bill 1572](#) was passed prohibiting the use of potable water to irrigate nonfunctional turf located on commercial, industrial, and institutional properties (CII), homeowners' associations, common interest developments, and community service organizations. The legislation will be phased in starting on January 1, 2027.

What is nonfunctional vs. functional turf?

Nonfunctional turf is ornamental grass not used for recreation, civic and/or other community events. It includes grass irrigated for aesthetics such as street medians and parking lots. Grass that is accessed only for mowing, but otherwise unused, is considered nonfunctional under the law.

Some common examples of nonfunctional grass are:

- Narrow strips of grass in or around parking lots
- Decorative grass along sidewalks, building edges, or fences
- Grass between buildings with no ability for access or activity
- Grass in medians, roundabouts, or entry signage zones
- Sloped or oddly shaped areas that are hard to use or water efficiently

Functional grass can include sports fields, parks, or other turf used for recreation, such as golf courses, playgrounds, picnic grounds, or pet exercise areas. Recreation may be either formal or informal. Cemeteries are also considered functional grass and are not subject to the prohibition.

Who is affected?

The irrigation restriction applies to commercial, industrial, and institutional properties, including but not limited to:

- Educational institutions
- Government and public agency buildings
- Grocery and retail stores
- Homeowner association-owned properties and common interest developments
- Hospitals
- Office, warehouse, and industrial buildings

- Religious institutions
- Restaurants

This restriction does not affect single-family residential homes or multifamily buildings that do not have a homeowners' association (HOA).

When do these restrictions go into effect?

Compliance will be phased in, starting on January 1, 2027.

- **Beginning January 1, 2027:** Covered public water systems and other entities specified in the law must comply, subject to applicable exceptions.
- **Beginning January 1, 2028:** Other institutional properties and commercial and industrial properties are subject to the restriction.
- **Beginning January 1, 2029:** Common areas of homeowners' associations, common interest developments, and community service organizations or similar entities are subject to the restriction.
- **Beginning January 1, 2031:** Certain properties in disadvantaged communities may be subject to a later compliance date, depending on the availability of state funding, as specified in the law.

Turfgrass Replacement Information & Other Resources

Sunny Slope Water Company encourages customers to explore turf replacement options as an alternative to shutting off irrigation completely on nonfunctional turf.

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, in partnership with participating water agencies, offers a turf replacement program to transform existing turfgrass into drought-tolerant, native landscapes. Visit SoCalWaterSmart.com for more information and to apply.

NonFunctionalTurfCA.org is a free, statewide resource that provides more information by industry sector and offers additional resources to help identify nonfunctional turf within a property.

Sunny Slope Water Company is here to help! If you're unsure whether your property is subject to this state law or need assistance identifying nonfunctional turf on your property, email

Conserve@sunnyslopewatercompany.com to reach our Water Conservation staff.

Frequently Asked Questions

I have trees in my grass areas; can I still irrigate them?

Even if grass watering has to stop under the new rules, trees in those areas can continue to receive the water they need. Yes, trees in nonfunctional grass areas may still be watered with potable water. However, you'll need to change how you water to focus only on the tree and avoid wasting water.

Smart ways to irrigate:

- Adjust sprinklers so they water only under the tree canopy
- Cap or turn off heads that irrigate surrounding unused lawn
- Switch to tree bubblers/drip irrigation for better efficiency
- Consider replacing nearby lawn with mulch or low-water plants, but make sure new irrigation still meets the trees' needs
- Use cycle-and-soak methods—short watering cycles with breaks between—to let water soak in deeply and avoid runoff

Are there any exclusions or exemptions?

It is equally important to understand what the law *does not* restrict. AB1572 explicitly allows for the continued watering of "functional grass", turf areas that serve a legitimate purpose. This includes:

- Parks and public recreational spaces
- Sports fields (e.g., soccer fields, baseball diamonds)
- Cemeteries
- Any other areas where people regularly gather, play, or engage in recreational activities

The intent is not to eliminate all green spaces, but to eliminate wasteful irrigation of unused turf.

Does it apply to residential properties?

No. The law does not apply to single-family homes or residential yards. The only exception is for common areas within homeowners' associations and common interest developments, which are subject to the prohibition beginning January 1, 2029.

What are commercial, industrial and institution customers?

- **Commercial** - a water user that provides or distributes a product or service (e.g. hotels, motels, restaurants, retail stores, office buildings, and other similar water users)
- **Industrial** - a water user that is primarily a manufacturer or processor of materials (e.g. manufacturing plants, food processors, oil refineries, and breweries, and other similar water users)
- **Institutional** - a water user dedicated to public service (e.g. higher education institutions, schools, courts, churches, hospitals, government facilities, and nonprofit research institutions, among other water users)