



## Drought not departing anytime soon

If this autumn seems dryer than most, it's not your imagination. September and October are typically among San Antonio's rainiest months. But not this year. In fact, this fall has been one of the driest and warmest our region has endured since the turn of the 21st century.

There's a misconception that because summer is over, so is the drought. But that's simply not true.

"Actually, the last five years are comparable to the 'drought of record' in the 1950s when the Edwards Aquifer level dropped to record lows," said Karen Guz, SAWS vice president of conservation.

In addition to stressing the region's main water supply, the extended drought is also responsible for drying out the soil, causing an all-time high number of water main breaks.

The good news is SAWS plans for extreme droughts just like this one, and is ready to weather the storm — or in this case, lack of storms. Thirty years ago, 100 percent of our water came from the Edwards Aquifer. Today,

SAWS manages 13 supply projects from seven different sources.

"The difference between the '50s and now is that San Antonio is prepared to successfully manage severe drought with diversified water supplies and reasonable conservation programs," Guz said, adding that customers have responded well to new watering rules.

Needless to say, now is *not* a good time to invest in new grass or other thirsty plants. Under the new rules, excess watering can be expensive. A drought surcharge will apply when residential water use goes above 20,000 gallons per month. And there are no variances for new plants.

A friendly reminder to homeowner associations: local ordinance prohibits requiring residents to refresh their landscapes with new grass or to water existing grass.

For more information on watering rules, visit [saws.org/drought](https://saws.org/drought).



## Be Ready to weather an emergency

Drought or not, South Central Texas is not immune to extreme winter weather and the catastrophe it can cause.

Emergencies happen. That's why SAWS is always working to make sure these events don't affect your water service in the future.

In addition to our own efforts behind the scenes to make San Antonio's water pipes, pumps and plants more winter-hardy, we've gathered our best tips and tools to help you "Be Ready" to protect your home and property when temperatures dip below freezing.

From how to prepare water during a boil water notice to which emergency supplies to keep on hand, our resources will help you be ready for the unexpected. It's all available in English and Spanish at [saws.org/BeReady](https://saws.org/BeReady).



[saws.org/BeReady](https://saws.org/BeReady)  
210-704-SAWS



**READY FOR THE UNEXPECTED**

## Event Calendar

### Cinema on Will's Plaza: The Nutcracker & the Four Realms

**Dec. 13**

Tobin Center  
100 Auditorium Circle  
[tobincenter.org/cinema](http://tobincenter.org/cinema)

### Second Saturday Habitat Work Day

**Dec. 14**

Mitchell Lake Audubon Center  
10750 Pleasanton Road  
[mitchelllake.audubon.org](http://mitchelllake.audubon.org)

### Valero Alamo Bowl

**Dec. 28**

The Alamodome  
100 Montana St.  
[alamobowl.com](http://alamobowl.com)

### Garden Sound Bath

**Dec. 29**

San Antonio Botanical Garden  
555 Funston Place  
[sabot.org/events](http://sabot.org/events)



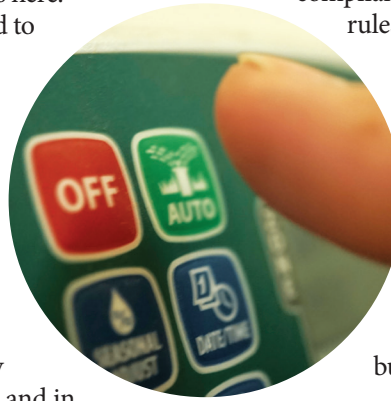
**Customer Service and 24-hour Emergency**

**210-704-SAWS (7297)**  
[saws.org/waternews](http://saws.org/waternews)

## Fall back on watering

The twice-annual time change is here. And it's a good reminder to tend to these landscaping tasks.

- **Change the batteries in your irrigation controller** (and smoke alarms, too). If the power even flickers, your irrigation controller can lose the correct time and that could throw off all the settings. A quick battery swap will keep you on track and in



compliance with the current watering rules — we're still in Stage 3.

- **Cut the run times in half or turn off the irrigation system.** Your landscape is preparing for winter dormancy so it doesn't require much water. If there's no rainfall, you can run your system manually, but no more than once a month.

## Got a leak alert from WaterSmart? Don't ignore it.

If you're receiving our free SAWS WaterSmart home report, you're probably enjoying seeing exactly when and where you're using the most water.

And if you've received a notice about a possible leak, you might be wondering if it's legit. It is.

That's because with the new SAWS ConnectH2O electronic water meters, customers will be alerted when continuous water use of five gallons per hour is detected for more than 48 hours. Depending on the contact information we have on file, you'll be

notified by email, text or automated phone call.

If that happens, check the usual suspects — toilets, indoor and outdoor faucets, appliances and other water connections. Many of them have a shutoff valve so you can check your meter to see if water has stopped flowing.

Remember: not all leaks are visible or even audible. Visit [saws.org/leak](http://saws.org/leak) to learn how to use your meter — whether mechanical or electronic — to detect leaks.

For more about leak alerts and other water-saving tools, visit [saws.org/watersmart](http://saws.org/watersmart).



## Let's talk toilet leaks

The most common problems the new SAWS ConnectH2O meters detect are toilet leaks. And they can use a shocking amount of water when they run amok.

It's a good idea to check your toilets for leaks, especially during the winter average period from mid-November to mid-March. (That's when your sewer service charges are calculated for next year based on your average winter water use.)

To test for leaks, put a few drops of food coloring in the toilet

tank and *don't* flush. Wait 15 minutes. If you see color in the bowl, the tank has a leak — most likely from a worn or dirty flapper valve. Before you call a plumber, check to see if mineral deposits are to blame. An inexpensive rinse with a jug of vinegar can clear it up.

Also, avoid using cleaning tablets in the toilet tank. They can eat away at internal parts, causing even worse leaks and pricey plumbing repairs.

