

Hosepipe ban

Date published: 29 June 2018

A hosepipe ban is in place across Northern Ireland. During the ban you should limit the use of tap water to the essentials, like drinking, cooking and washing.

Activities not allowed

During the hosepipe ban, you are not allowed to:

- water a garden using a hosepipe
- water outdoor plants on domestic or other non-commercial premises using a hosepipe
- draw water using a hosepipe for domestic, recreational use
- fill or maintain a domestic swimming or paddling pool using a hosepipe
- fill or maintain a domestic pond using a hosepipe
- clean a private leisure boat using a hosepipe
- clean a private motor vehicle using a hosepipe
- clean walls or windows of domestic premises using a hosepipe
- clean paths or patios of domestic or other non-commercial premises using a hosepipe

Water saving tips

To help save water:

- take shorter showers
- take a shower instead of a bath
- turn off the tap when brushing your teeth
- avoid watering lawns – even when they look dry and brown, they'll spring back with the first heavy rain
- make sure your washing machine is full – don't put on a half load
- turn off the tap while washing your hands or shaving
- fix leaking taps
- keep a jug of water in the fridge so there's no need to run the water until it gets cold
- use a bowl for washing vegetables
- fill the kettle with only as much water as you need

If you experience water problems

If you experience water problems in your area, check the [NI Water website](#) and use the postcode search facility.

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Appeal to use less water

Date published: 29 June 2018

As the dry spell continues, the public is being asked to stop non-essential water use, including hoses and sprinklers.

Non-essential use

NI Water has warned that continuing to use water for non-essential purposes will likely result in supply interruption in many areas.

It's expected a formal hose pipe ban will be introduced this weekend which will mean you can't water private gardens or cars.

Water saving tips

To help save water:

- take shorter showers
- take a shower instead of a bath
- don't wash cars or vans
- turn off the tap when brushing your teeth
- avoid watering lawns – even when they look dry and brown, they'll spring back with the first heavy rain
- make sure your washing machine is full – don't put on a half load
- turn off the tap while washing your hands or shaving
- fix leaking taps
- keep a jug of water in the fridge so there's no need to run the water until it gets cold
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Help prevent wildfires

Visitors to rural areas and residents are advised to be vigilant for wildfires.

The risk of wildfires

The current spell of dry weather combined with the current hot conditions has resulted in elevated wildfire risk across Northern Ireland.

With the weekend and summer holidays approaching, there will be an expected increase in members of the public taking this opportunity to explore the countryside,

Wildfires are not natural, they are almost always started by humans either deliberately or through carelessness. They put lives at risk, destroy our surroundings and the wildlife in them, and are a real cost to society.

Members of the public visiting the countryside should take particular precautions so as not to accidentally cause wildfires through their activities.

Under the current conditions, any ignition source in hazardous fuels may give rise to wildfire development and spread, particularly in areas with dead grasses, gorse, forestry and heather and, can cover extensive areas in a very short period of time and may be hazardous to human life and wildlife.

Preventing wildfires

If you are in the countryside:

- extinguish cigarettes and other smoking materials properly
- never throw cigarette ends out of car windows

- only use barbecues in designated areas and never leave them unattended
- make sure that barbecues are fully extinguished and cold before disposing of their contents
- avoid using open fires in the countryside
- do not leave bottles or glass behind – sunlight shining through glass can start a fire
- be considerate in parking vehicles so as not to impede access by emergency vehicles

More information on fire safety outdoors can be found on the page below:

What to do if you see a fire

If you see a fire in the countryside:

- report it immediately to the [Fire & Rescue Service](#)
- do not attempt to tackle fires that cannot be put out with a bucket of water
- leave the area as soon as possible
- if you see someone setting fires, report it to the [PSNI](#)

[Certain homosexual offences can be removed from criminal records](#)

Date published: 28 June 2018

If you have a conviction or caution for a homosexual offence, which is no longer criminal, you can apply to have it removed from police and court records.

Offences which are no longer criminal

The decriminalised offences are:

- buggery
- gross indecency
- procuring others to commit homosexual acts

The activity must have been:

- consensual
- with a person aged 17 or older

It must also not be an offence today. Sexual activity in a public toilet is not included as it is still illegal.

If you received a conviction or caution for any of the decriminalised offences, you can apply to have your record wiped clean or 'disregarded'.

Receiving a disregard

A disregarded offence means it will be treated as never having happened and won't appear in criminal record checks. You also don't need to disclose it on application forms or in court cases. A successful application also leads to an automatic legal pardon.

Posthumous pardons

Anyone who has since died but was convicted of a decriminalised consensual homosexual offence with someone over 17, will be automatically pardoned.

How to apply

It is free to apply for a disregard. Go to the link below for more information on pardons and disregards and to complete the application form:

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[Check if you're eligible for Rate Rebate](#)

Date published: 19 June 2018

Tenants and homeowners should check if they're eligible for the new Rate Rebate Scheme. Ratepayers getting Universal Credit can get a rebate on their rates. This is being rolled out along with Universal Credit across Northern Ireland.

Rate Rebate

To apply for Rate Rebate, you must:

If you're a tenant or homeowner, you can only make a claim for Rate Rebate once you've been awarded Universal Credit.

Any claim should be made as soon as possible following your first Universal Credit payment.

More information is available on this page:

How to apply

You have to register for an online account using your own email address. Once you have an account, you can apply online at this link:

You can also call Land & Property Services on 0300 200 7802.

If Universal Credit has not been yet rolled out in a particular area or someone is not eligible for Universal Credit, such as pensioners, rates support will continue through [Housing Benefit](#).

More useful links

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