

Temporary Urgency Change Petitions Information and Guidance



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Overview

The State Water Board is committed to working cooperatively and diligently with water users throughout the state to find appropriate and timely solutions to their urgent, drought-related water needs. If you currently possess a water right and can demonstrate an urgent, drought-related need to modify the terms of your permit or license, you may formally request or “petition” the State Water Board for a conditional, temporary urgency change. Temporary urgency change orders issued by the State Water Board enable right holders to temporarily deviate from the terms of their existing water right in order to provide relief from drought conditions. Temporary urgency change orders last up to 180 days and are renewable.

Eligible Parties

Right holders with permits and licenses are eligible to file a temporary urgency change petition with the State Water Board. This is often the best option for water right holders who believe they can meet their current, drought-related water needs through modification of their existing water right permit or license.

How do I determine if I currently have a water right?

The quickest way to find out if you currently hold a water right is to search the State Water Board Division of Water Right’s [eWRIMS database](#).

What type of change can I request?

You can request to change the point of diversion, purpose of use, place of use or other terms and conditions of your permit or license.

How do I request a temporary urgency change?

You may request a temporary urgency change by completing a [Petition for Change Form](#), and mailing it to the State Water Resources Control Board’s Division of Water Rights at PO Box 2000, Sacramento, CA 95812-2000. If you are facing an imminent threat to public health due to drought, notify staff by writing a note at the top of your

petition form “Imminent threat to public health”.

How much will it cost?

Filing fees for temporary urgency change petitions start from a minimum of \$1,000 for diversions of 10 acre-feet or less. See the [Division of Water Rights Fee Schedule](#) for more information.

What does the State Water Board need in order to issue a temporary change order?

The State Water Board must be able to make the following findings in order to issue a temporary urgency change order: (i) the applicant has an urgent need for the change; (ii) the proposed change will not cause injury to any lawful water user; (iii) the proposed change is in the public interest, and (iv) the proposed change will not result in an unreasonable effect on fish, wildlife, or other instream resources.

How long will it take?

The State Water Board will make every effort to process drought-related, temporary urgency change petitions as quickly and efficiently as possible. Processing time will vary by the complexity of the change requested, the completeness and accuracy of information provided in the change petition, and the potential for adverse effects on other water users and public trust resources such as fish and wildlife. The Division of Water Right’s goal is a 30-day processing time for initial action on drought-related temporary urgency change petitions. If granted, the change is authorized in a temporary urgency change order. Public noticing can occur after the Order is issued. Here are some examples of recent temporary urgency change [notices](#) and [orders](#). A flow chart showing the urgency change process is shown on the next page.

What if I have questions?

If you would like to discuss your particular situation with a staff person who works in your geographic area, see the permitting and licensing staff contact information provided [here](#).

What is the process for a Temporary Urgency Change?

