



## City of Santa Barbara Water System & Firefighting Facts

- Santa Barbara’s water system is built to support firefighting efforts for multiple structure fires within a pressure zone.
- All of the Santa Barbara Fire Department’s equipment has computer-aided maps that show the exact location of every hydrant and its current operational status.
- No municipal water system can provide enough water to suppress an urban wildfire, like Los Angeles experienced from January 6-9, 2025.
- The City regularly inspects and maintains all its active water system assets including its hydrants, valves, water mains, pump stations, and reservoirs.
- The City regularly performs studies to assess water system performance and prioritizes capital improvement projects to ensure the greatest needs are met.
- The City regularly adopts cost-effective technologies as they become available to enhance system sustainability and resilience.
- The City collaborates with local and state agencies and participates in the California Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (CalWARN) to maintain disaster preparedness.
- Prevention remains the best and most efficient means to protect life, property, and the community from natural disasters.

### To learn more about emergency preparedness, visit:

- County of Santa Barbara Emergency Preparedness - [CountyofSB.org/520/Office-of-Emergency-Management](https://CountyofSB.org/520/Office-of-Emergency-Management)
- City of Santa Barbara Ready, Set, Go! - [SantaBarbaraCA.gov/ReadySetGo](https://SantaBarbaraCA.gov/ReadySetGo)
- City of Santa Barbara Fire Department - [SantaBarbaraCA.gov/Fire-Department](https://SantaBarbaraCA.gov/Fire-Department)
- City of Santa Barbara Office of Emergency Services - [SantaBarbaraCA.gov/OES](https://SantaBarbaraCA.gov/OES)

### Sign Up For ReadySBC Alerts or Update Your Contact Information:

To receive these emergency notifications from the County of Santa Barbara Office of Emergency Management, you must sign up for alerts at [ReadySBC.org](https://ReadySBC.org). If you’re already signed up, confirm or update your account information this month. Please spell out your entire street address, as this is a common reason community members don’t receive alerts. If we can’t reach you, we can’t alert you.

#### Public Works Water Resources Division

[SantaBarbaraCA.gov/Water-Resources](https://SantaBarbaraCA.gov/Water-Resources)

(805) 564-5387

#### Fire Department

[SantaBarbaraCA.gov/Fire-Department](https://SantaBarbaraCA.gov/Fire-Department)

(805) 564-5702

## **Drinking Water Systems and Wildfire FAQ**

### **Is the City's Drinking Water System designed to fight wildfires?**

Drinking water systems are not designed to combat catastrophic wildfires. Drinking water systems have long been designed around water quality and meeting peak day (summer) demands, which includes flows for urban fires, including multiple structure fires simultaneously. There are many standards in place to ensure community drinking water systems are designed, constructed, maintained, and tested to ensure systems are prepared to perform when needed.

### **Why is Escondido Reservoir (located adjacent to Escondido Park) not in service?**

Escondido Reservoir (Reservoir) is a retired drinking water reservoir and has been out of service since 2000 (~25 years). Although the Reservoir is out of service, the site contains assets critical to supporting the drinking water system. The City has studied storage needs throughout the City to ensure we meet peak demands. The City currently has 11 potable water reservoirs in service to help ensure reliable service.

The science and regulation around water quality has evolved over the last 30 years, which has identified the age of treated water as a major factor in water quality degradation. This means for optimum water quality; customers should consume treated water within a few days of being produced. Storing an excess amount of treated water can open the door to a long list of water quality issues. For this reason, water systems are designed to balance the need to quickly turn over treated water to maintain water quality while preserving sufficient storage to meet peak demands.

Drinking Water Systems are not designed to combat wildfires. They are designed to meet peak day (summer) demands, plus, water flow demands to fight multiple structure fires.

### **How does the City ensure that fire hydrants are maintained properly and are ready for service?**

The City has over 2,600 active fire hydrants. They are regularly inspected and tested to ensure performance when needed.

Reinvestment in water infrastructure remains a high priority. Ongoing and upcoming infrastructure projects include replacement of water mains, pump stations, and reservoirs to ensure reliable service and meet established demands.

### **Are there sufficient water supplies to meet demands during urban structure fires or wildfires?**

The City has one of the most diverse water supply portfolios in the State to ensure sufficient water to meet health and safety demands during prolonged drought periods. The City has sufficient raw water supplies to combat urban structure fires. The City's water system was not designed to treat and convey sufficient supplies to fight wildfire. Demands for water during a wildfire will exceed the peak demands of the City's drinking water system.

### **When a Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS), or an unplanned outage, happens, what is the impact on local water systems?**

When a Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) or an unplanned power outage occurs, it can disrupt the operation of pumps and treatment facilities that solely rely on grid electricity to maintain water flow and pressure. However, the City has implemented measures to ensure disruptions are minimized via backup generators and/or bypasses at all critical facilities. In a typical year, grid power is lost several times due to planned grid maintenance, grid electrical equipment failure, grid accidents, grid emergencies, or a PSPS. In most cases, customers are not aware of the impacts to their water service resulting from a grid power outage.