

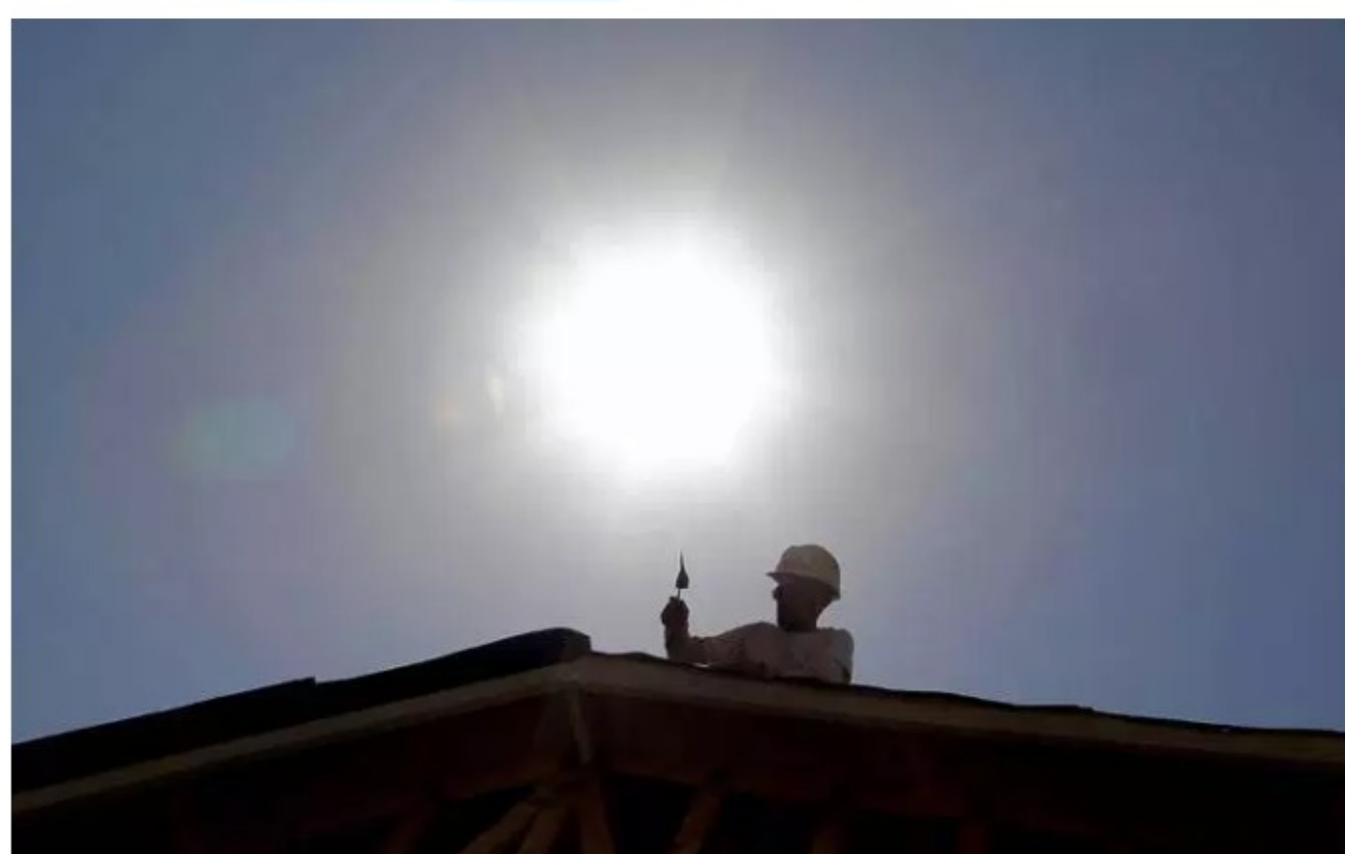
DROUGHT June 20, 2019 3:37 pm

Okanagan elevated to Level 3 drought rating, water conservation urged



By Shelby Thom

South Okanagan Video Journalist Global News

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Much of B.C. has been elevated to Level 3 drought conditions.

AP Photo/File

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Warm and dry conditions have prompted the provincial government to declare Level 3 drought conditions in much of B.C., including the Okanagan region.

Residents, industry, farmers and municipalities are being asked to reduce water use by 30 per cent.

“Drought Level 3 indicates that serious ecosystem or socioeconomic impacts are possible,” said a drought bulletin issued by the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) on Thursday.

READ MORE: [Okanagan raised to level two drought rating](#)

The OBWB says spring rains have not made up for the low snowpack, some upland reservoirs did not fill, Okanagan Lake did not reach “full pool” this year and some utilities are already releasing water from reservoirs to meet downstream needs.



Provincial drought level map as of June 17, 2019.

Source: [BC Drought Information Portal](#)

Much of B.C. is under a Level 3 drought declaration, meaning a water crisis could be looming if people don't conserve water.

BC Government

The forecast also suggests a dry and warmer than normal summer ahead.

“This is really preparing us for the possibility that we could have low flows so just making sure that we have enough to get us through the summer and even into the fall when irrigation is still on, farms need it for crops,” said OBWB spokesperson Corinne Jackson.

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“We’re going to be needing it for firefighting and we’re also going to need to make sure that there is enough in our creeks to meet the needs of returning salmon.”

Jackson suggests people visit the [MakeWaterWork.ca](#) website for tips on how to conserve water.

“Things as simple as making sure that when you are watering, that you’re only watering during the coolest part of the day — so between dusk and dawn — not in 30 degree temperatures,” she said.

She said local water utilities are currently responsible for implementing water restrictions, but should things get worse, the province could step in and demand utilities pull back on water usage.

READ MORE: [Environment Canada: High likelihood of a warmer, drier summer than normal in B.C.](#)

“The more we save now, the better condition we will be in if we do end up where we do not get significant rains and if we do have high temperatures and evaporation, the idea being that by saving water now it puts us in a better situation for the potential for further drought,” she said.

The last time a Level 3 drought was declared in the Okanagan was on Aug. 31, 2017. Similar conditions are now being seen months earlier.

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