

# Water rations to start

## In capital and State of Mexico, cuts to begin this Saturday

BY DAVID AGREN  
The News

Federal and local water officials on Monday outlined details of an upcoming suspension of water service that is expected to impact residents of at least 10 Mexico City boroughs and more than a dozen municipalities in the State of Mexico.

Service is scheduled to be cut Saturday and remain suspended until Monday due to a reduction in water delivered to Mexico City. Water officials say that the cuts are nothing new for Mexico City, which has long been vexed by water supply issues, but admit that the reasons for this year's suspension are different.

"This isn't a situation that the city hasn't already suffered from," said Ramón Aguirre, general director of the Mexico City Water System.

"What's important to emphasize is

that it's the first time there has been a suspension due to a lack of water."

Dry conditions in a water system known as the Cutzamala – which supplies 30 percent of the Mexico City area's potable water – prompted the suspensions.

Water officials say that a lack of precipitation during recent rainy seasons have left dam reserves to the west of Mexico City dangerously low.

Aguirre also warned of future service cuts during the final weekends of the next five months to mitigate the situation.

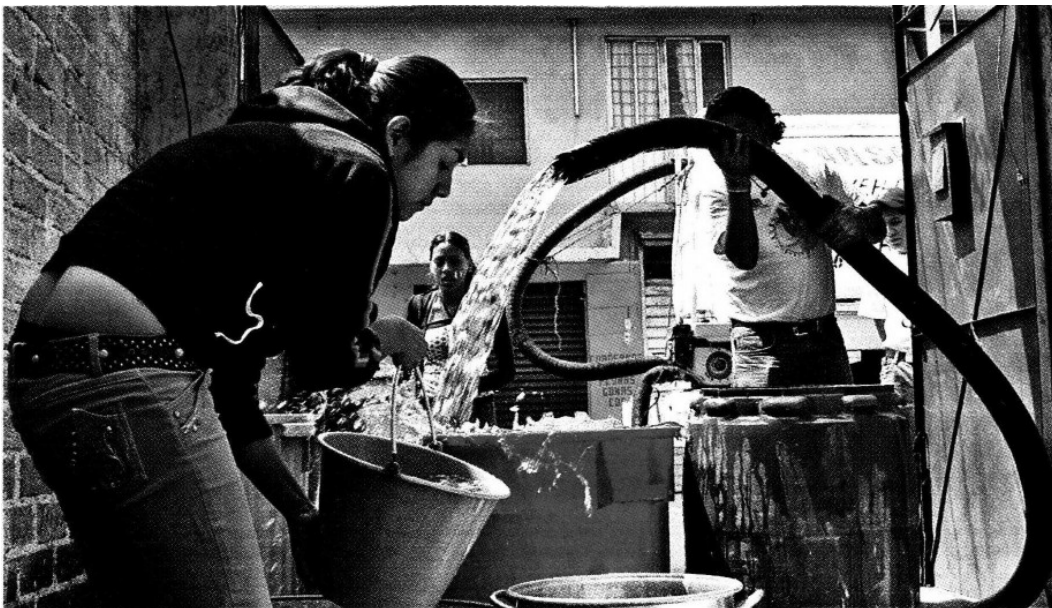
The water flow toward Mexico City will be cut by 50 percent, but one official working in the basin told reporters last Friday that service would need to be suspended for 110 days in order for levels to fully recover. Efrén Villalón, general director of the Valley of Mexico Water Basin Agency, estimated that water levels could drop to 30 percent capacity by the time the annual rainy season begins. He said that the water level situation had been similar back in 1990, but was less grave due to the smaller population living in the Mexico City area.

Similar service suspensions lasting five days occurred last year, when maintenance was conducted on the

pipes carrying water from the Cutzamala to Mexico City.

Boroughs expecting service suspension are those that depend heavily on the Cutzamala system, including Cuajimalpa, Magdalena Contreras, Azcapotzalco, Álvaro Obregón, Miguel Hidalgo and large parts of Benito Juárez. Water officials say that some neighborhoods in Coyoacán, Tlalpan, Iztapalapa and Iztacalco will also be affected, along with State of Mexico municipalities such as Naucalpan, Tlalnepantla and Huixquilucan.

Monday's announcement united officials from the National Water Commission, or Conagua, with their Mexico City counterparts, even though relations between the federal water agency and the capital government have been testy of late. José Luis Luege Tamargo, Conagua director, said that further repairs would be carried out in the Cutzamala water system and that steps would be taken to encourage conservation among residents, whose per capita consumption is 300 liters per day. The Conagua director also promised to take action against the operators of an estimated 3,800 unauthorized wells in the Mexico City area.



D.F. neighborhoods, like the one in Iztapalapa pictured above last March, will suffer from further water shortages.

