

Army called in to help drought-hit New Zealand towns

February 28 2020



New Zealand authorities, battling a drought, are considering water restrictions in Auckland, the country's biggest city

New Zealand has deployed soldiers to help prevent drought-stricken North Island towns from running dry as authorities consider imposing water restrictions in Auckland, the country's largest city.

Meteorologists have said areas of the North Island are experiencing the longest dry spell for seven years, with severe drought conditions in Northland and parts of greater Auckland.

Troops with trucks capable of carrying large loads of [water](#) were sent to Northland this week to help replenish storage tanks in parched towns and settlements.

"Water is an important resource and we are happy to help the communities," second lieutenant Josh Gaul-Crown said Thursday.

Tankers owned by dairy giant Fonterra are also being used to freight in water between their regular milk collection runs.

The situation has become so dire that thieves stole 40,000 litres (8,800 gallons) of water from a [tank](#) at Tinopai school, an act principal Sonya Kaihe described as "despicable".

Northland civil defence chief Graeme MacDonald said central holding tanks in the towns of Rawene, Kaikohe and Kaitaia had been replenished and there was no need for residents to panic.

"If the taps go dry, we have water available in tanks for you," he said.

"We know that you're under stress, we know that it's a difficult time, your water will be delivered in due course, just be patient."

The government has allocated NZ\$2.0 million (US\$1.3 million) to ensure supplies are maintained and plans are under way to divert bore water from farms to the regional hub of Kaitaia.

In Auckland, utility Watercare said soaring demand with unseasonably hot temperatures was placing further pressure on already depleted

supplies.

Spokeswoman Roseline Klein urged the city's 1.5 million residents to curb water usage if they wanted to avoid restrictions being imposed.

"With further hot and dry days forecast, we're growing increasingly concerned about Auckland's skyrocketing water use," she said.

"We're calling for people to think before turning on their taps."

© 2020 AFP

Citation: Army called in to help drought-hit New Zealand towns (2020, February 28) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-02-army-drought-hit-zealand-towns.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.