

Waterless residents making do

Capitalinos criticize 'drastic' action

BY JULIE WATSON
Associated Press

Hundreds of thousands of capital residents were struggling Sunday to adapt to life without water over the weekend as Mexico City shut down a main water pipeline under a new conservation program.

Officials cut service to more than 2 million residents after some reservoirs dropped to their lowest levels in 16 years.

Saleswoman Amanda Sánchez, 46, was not happy about having her taps shut off.

"It's hard, especially for working mothers like me, because I use more water on the weekends," she said.

To prepare for the three-day shutdown, which ends Tuesday, residents filled underground cisterns, saved water in buckets to bathe and were flushing toilets and doing the wash only when necessary.

Even before this weekend, some residents have had virtually no running water because of the poor condition of their pipes.

Chemist Jesús Anzúrez, 32, who

had to save water in buckets, said the action was too drastic and could affect children if their parents had not prepared. "They should educate people so they don't waste water, such as promoting the use of water-saving shower heads, instead of cutting off service," he said.

Officials say they have no choice: An unusually dry rainy season last year left the city's Cutzamala water system, comprising seven reservoirs, at 63 percent capacity compared to 85 percent in previous years, according to a Mexico City government news release. The system supplies 25 percent of the metropolitan area's water.

City water pipes are so leaky, experts estimate 40 percent of drinking water is lost, and nearly all Mexico City's abundant rainfall simply flows into sewage drains.

The shut-off also will allow authorities to make much-needed repairs to the pipelines. The Mexico City government and the National Water Commission will interrupt service for three days every month until the May rainy season begins.

