

# Water officials gloomy as more cutoffs loom

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The News

With a new round of water cutoffs looming in Mexico City, predictions of future shortages grew more dire and official finger-pointing intensified on Wednesday.

The upcoming suspension will run from April 9 to 11, when many residents are on vacation for Semana Santa. But faucets could run dry into the following week for an additional three days in some areas while water pressure is returned to normal, federal authorities warned at a press conference Wednesday.

The cutoffs are becoming more severe as an ongoing drought – the worst the capital has seen in 18 years – also increases in severity. And the last two months of rationing, during which the city received 15 percent less water for three-day spurts, served as little more than a drop in the bucket in terms of combatting the shortage, said Efrén Villalón, a top official for the metropolitan area at the National Water Commission, or **Conagua**.

The city may have saved 3.7 mil-

lion cubic meters of water, but the shortages at drying reservoirs are at 150 million cubic meters and growing, Villalón said.

“If levels continue to drop we may have to start filtering sediment from the bottom of the reservoirs out of our drinking water,” Villalón told The News.

As conditions worsen, so do the accusations. **Conagua** said Wednesday that Mexico City is holding back critical water development projects by refusing to sign onto a fund to build treatment plants and repair

the Cutzamala water system.

The Cutzamala system of rivers and reservoirs from the State of Mexico is at the heart of the shortage and has not seen repairs in years, federal officials said. **Conagua** is now funding 287 million pesos for emergency reconstruction on the system, which supplies Mexico City with close to 30 percent of its potable water.

**Conagua** officials say the city won't sign because it wants the federal government to guarantee the investments and to have the fund focus on water delivery above all.

The city says **Conagua** is only offering to secure funds during the Calderón administration while many of the projects require a longer-term investment.

“We are facing perhaps the biggest water supply problem in the world,” Ramón Aguirre, the city's top water official, told The News. “This will not be resolved so quickly.”

**Conagua** says that without a dramatic improvement in the water supply, weekly service suspensions could start in July and continue for a full year.

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EFREN VILLALÓN  
Conagua official



Mexico City residents stock up for water rationing prior to a scheduled cutoff earlier this year.

