



# Template Workplace Water Policy

This policy has been prepared by the Legal Assistance Centre.  
It can be adjusted and adapted to the needs of individual companies and businesses.

## Introduction

The Constitution of Namibia provides for the right to human dignity, and part of this right is access to safe, sufficient and affordable water. However, this right goes hand in hand with a responsibility to use water appropriately. This responsibility applies to every person in the country.

Much of Namibia is desert or semi-desert, meaning that the water is always a precious resource and there is an ever-present responsibility on every person and entity to ensure the sustainability of water. The scarcity of water has become more pressing in recent months and as of October 2015 the country is facing a drought with the water supply under great stress. Dams are drying up and groundwater is overused. Our current rate of water consumption is not sustainable. If the water usage keeps increasing, the water supply will not be able to keep up with it. As a result, shortages or government restrictions might come into place.

As our population and economy grows, so too does our demand for water. Based on current projections, it is estimated that the Windhoek area will only have a full supply of water until next September 2016. Thereafter, the City of Windhoek will only be able to supply 30% of the actual water needed. In order to address this, the City of Windhoek aims to reduce between 15 to 25 % of the current water use. If this is achieved, then the water supply could be extended from Sept 2016 through to the 2017 rainy season. Business and industry therefore have a responsibility to become efficient water users. This means considering how much water your business uses and coming up with a plan to save water.

## Why workplaces have a responsibility

There is only a limited amount of fresh water in Namibia, and this water is used by all people including businesses, households, farmers, the government, and many others. All users compete for the same water, and if it is not responsibly managed by everyone then there will not be enough. In some workplaces, large amounts of water can be used and sometimes even wasted. As consumers we expect access to safe, sufficient and affordable water, but this expectation comes with a responsibility to take care that we do not over-use the water supply.



## Why have a policy on water

Having and using a *Workplace Water Policy* is in the interest of your workplace because it contributes towards efforts to limit the risk of water scarcity. Water scarcity is a realistic and serious problem for Namibia and will directly impact business activities in various ways:

- **Higher costs for water** which will have an **impact on business overhead costs**;
- **Less water available** for business activities which could **restrict some business activities** and result in financial loss due to disruptions of activities. Water-intensive products might be phased out by law;
- **Increased health risks** to employees which in turn will **affect business productivity**;
- Government **restrictions and penalties** which could **restrict some business activities** and result in financial loss due to disruptions of activities; and
- **Reputational damage** for businesses that waste water.

By saving water, the impact of water scarcity to your business will be reduced. A water-efficient business will be less dependent on water in times of shortage. Overall, reducing water is not only in your own interest, but also in the interest of our economy and the environment.

## How to become a water efficient workplace

To reduce water use and become a more water efficient workplace, develop and implement a water management plan:

### 1. Obtain staff support and create awareness

- Raising staff awareness is a cost-effective and sustainable way to save water.
- Encourage staff members to save water by regularly providing information on how they can save water.
- Install reminder signs in staff areas such as your kitchen/s and bathroom/s to remind staff and customers to save water.

### 2. Encourage water saving measures

- Close taps after using them.
- Install a water-saving device in toilet cisterns, and don't flush the toilet unnecessarily.
- Do not allow office cars to be washed with a hose, instead use a bucket and only wash cars when needed.
- Do not allow walkways/driveways to be cleaned with a hose, instead use a broom.
- Water gardens and lawns once every three days or more, in the early morning or late afternoon to prevent evaporation.



- Replace plants and garden areas that consume large amounts of water with plants and garden areas that use very little water (for example succulent plants). Encourage staff members to do the same at their family homes.

### **3. Identify and repair leaks**

- Urge employees to report leaks and other problems.
- Regularly ask staff to check taps, toilets and pipes for leaks.
- Ensure that delegated staff know how to turn the water off should a water leak be detected at the workplace.
- Ensure that you have the number of a reliable plumber available to repair leaks quickly and effectively.

If a staff member is aware of a leak in a public place, you should contact the local government office. For the City of Windhoek, call the Department of Infrastructure at 061 – 290 2402.

### **4. Set a workplace reduction target**

- Assign a staff member to monitor your water meter and identify your water use.
- Compare measurements weekly to determine unusually high use and possible leaks. Set workplace targets to reduce water usage by 5%, 10% etc.

### **5. Put the water management plan into action**

- Evaluate your water use and efficiency measures and give feedback to your staff and management.

Developing and implementing a water management plan will help your company be better prepared for water problems. It will limit the risk of large scale water scarcity and will lower financial cost and losses throughout your business. Please use water wisely as it is in everyone's best interest to keep safe, sufficient and affordably water available.