

# S. Tahoe among few communities without water meters

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

Despite urgent calls for water conservation amid one of California's worst droughts, more than 255,000 homeowners and businesses across the state can still use all the water they want without paying higher bills.

And nobody even knows how much water they are using.

From Bakersfield to Sacramento to Shasta County to Lake Tahoe, 42 communities in California have not installed the most basic tool of water management – water meters – for all of their connections.

People without meters are charged a flat monthly rate in those areas for water, usually between \$20 and \$35 a month. And those communities use 39 percent more water per capita than the state average, according to an analysis of state Department of Water Resources records by the San Jose Mercury News.

Most California residents have had water meters for generations.

Communities have different explanations for why they've been slow to install meters. In South Lake Tahoe, officials had to upgrade sewer systems that were in danger of polluting the lake, and they still need to modernize water systems for fire protection, said Richard Solbrig, general manager of the South Tahoe Public Utility District.

"Basically our community had other priorities that were a lot more important," he said. "A lot of people get upset when we

say Lake Tahoe is different than other places. But the reality is that it is.”

**Read the whole story**