

Water Conservation Tips and Trivia

SAVING WATER AROUND YOUR HOME

- Verify that your home is leak-free! Many homes have hidden water leaks. Here's a way to check: turn off all faucets both inside and outside your home. Look at your water meter (usually located in a ground vault somewhere near the front of your home). If the dial is moving, you may have a leak. Make a note of the meter reading (the numbers on the dial). Leaving all water turned off, read your water meter two hours later. If the meter shows a higher number, there is probably a leak somewhere in your yard or home.
- Repair dripping faucets by replacing washers. If your faucet is dripping at the rate of one drop per second, you can expect to waste 2,700 gallons per year, which will add to the cost of water and sewer bills.
- Check for toilet leaks by adding a few drops of food coloring to the tank. If the toilet is leaking, color will appear in the toilet bowl within 30 minutes. Check the toilet for worn out, corroded or bent parts. Most replacement parts are inexpensive, readily available and easily installed.
- Avoid flushing the toilet unnecessarily. Dispose of tissues and other such waste in the trash can rather than the toilet.
- Take shorter showers. Replace your showerhead with an ultra-low-flow showerhead (which are the only type sold in California). Some units are available that allow you to cut off the flow without adjusting the water temperature knobs.
- Use the minimum amount of water needed for a bath by closing the drain first and filling the tub only 1/3 full.
- Don't let water run while brushing your teeth, shaving or washing your face.
- Retrofit household faucets by installing aerators with flow restrictors.
- Operate automatic dishwashers and clothes washers only when they are fully loaded or properly set the water level for the size of load you are using.
- When washing dishes by hand, fill one sink or basin with soapy water. Rinse in another basin filled with hot, clear water.
- Store drinking water in the refrigerator rather than letting the tap run every time you want a cool glass of water.
- Do not use running water to thaw meat or other frozen foods. Defrost food overnight in the refrigerator or by using the defrost setting on your microwave.
- Consider installing an "instant" water heater on sinks that are located far from your main water heater so you don't have to let the water run while it heats up. This will reduce heating costs for your household. These units are sometimes referred to as "point of use" water heaters.
- Insulate your water pipes. You'll get hot water faster plus avoid wasting water while it heats up.

SAVING WATER OUTDOORS

- It's easy to over-water your lawn! A good rain can eliminate the need for watering for as long as two weeks. If your grass springs back up after you step on it, it does not need to be watered.
- Water lawns during the early morning hours when temperatures and wind speeds are the lowest. This reduces losses from evaporation.
- Don't water your street, driveway or sidewalk. Position sprinklers so that water lands on the lawn and shrubs, not paved areas.
- Install sprinklers that are the most water-efficient for each use. Micro sprinklers, drip irrigation and soaker hoses are examples of water-efficient methods of irrigation.
- Regularly check sprinkler systems and timing devices to be sure they are operating properly. Broken or poorly adjusted sprinklers may go unnoticed since sprinklers are often set to operate during early morning hours.
- Raise your lawn mower blade to at least three inches. A lawn cut higher encourages grass roots to grow deeper, shades the root system and holds soil moisture better than a closely-clipped lawn.

- Avoid over-fertilizing your lawn. The application of fertilizers increases the need for water. Don't fertilize monthly, instead apply fertilizers which contain slow-release, water-insoluble forms of nitrogen.
- Mulch to retain moisture in the soil. Mulching also helps to control weeds that compete with plants for water.
- Plant native and/or drought-tolerant grasses, ground covers, shrubs and trees. Once established, they do not need to be watered as frequently and they usually will survive a dry period without any watering. Group plants together based on similar water needs.
- Do not hose down your driveway or sidewalk. Use a broom to clean leaves and other debris from these areas. Using a hose to clean a driveway can waste hundreds of gallons of water.
- Outfit your hose with a nozzle that stops water flow completely when not actually using the water. Remember to turn off the water at the faucet when you are finished using the hose.
- Do not leave sprinklers or hoses unattended. Your garden hose can pour out 600 gallons or more in only a few hours. Use a timer to remind yourself to turn it off.
- Check all hoses, connectors and spigots regularly. Replace hose washers to eliminate leaks.
- Consider using a commercial car wash that recycles water. Ask at the car wash if they recycle water: often they will display a sign stating that they do.
- If you wash your own car, use a bucket for the soapy water and a hose shut-off nozzle.
- Avoid the installation of ornamental water features (such as fountains) unless it recycles its own water supply (these are called "re-circulating" fountains). Locate where there are minimal losses due to evaporation and wind drift.

To get even more ideas for saving water around the home, please visit the "Virtual Home" website at www.H2ouse.org

GENERAL WATER SAVING GUIDELINES

- Create an awareness of the need for water conservation among your children. Avoid the purchase of recreational water toys that require a constant stream of water.
- Be aware of, and follow all water conservation rules and restrictions that may be in effect in your area.
- Report all significant water losses (broken pipes, open hydrants, errant sprinklers on public property, etc.) to your local water company.
- Support projects that will lead to an increased use of reclaimed wastewater (recycled water) for irrigation uses.
- Support efforts and programs to create a concern for water conservation among tourists and visitors to our state. Make sure your visitors understand the need for, and benefits of, water conservation.
- Encourage your friends and neighbors to be part of a water conscious community. Promote water conservation in community newsletters, on bulletin boards and by example.
- Conserve water because it is the right thing to do. Don't waste water just because someone else is footing the bill, such as when you are staying at a hotel.
- Try to do one thing each day that will result in saving water. Remember, every drop counts. And every person can make a difference!
- Encourage your school system to help develop and promote a water conservation ethic among children and adults.

WATER TRIVIA

- A healthy adult needs 2 quarts of water a day. Most people drink less than this.
- A person can live without food for about a month, but only about a week without water.
- About 6,800 gallons of water is required to grow a day's food for a family of four.
- Eighty percent of the fresh water we use in the U.S. is for irrigating crops.
- Tomatoes are 95% water.
- One gallon of water weighs 8.34 pounds.

- The human brain is composed of 95% water; blood is 82% water; and the lungs are nearly 90% water.
- "Distilled" water is water that does not contain minerals.
- The first water pipes in the US were made of hollowed-out logs.
- The Mississippi River is about 2,340 miles long, making it the longest river in North America.
- The world's rainiest place is Mt. Wai'ale'ale, Kauai, Hawaii. During an average year, there are only 15 dry days.
- The five Great Lakes form the largest fresh surface water system in the world.
- If all the water in the Great Lakes was spread evenly across the continental US, the ground would be covered with almost 10 feet of water.
- Lake Tahoe is the second deepest lake in the U.S.-it has a maximum depth of 1,645 feet. It holds of 40 trillion gallons of water-enough to cover the state of California to a depth of 14 inches!