

Are There Water Wasters At Your House?

When everything is quiet at your house, do you ever hear what sounds like water running? Do family members leave the water running while they brush their teeth or do the dishes? Does anyone regularly take 15 minute or half hour showers?

If you answer "yes" to these questions, it's not just water that is going down the drain at your house...you're probably wasting money, as well.

While we are fortunate not to have acute water shortages in our area, efficient use of our water resources offers major environmental, public health, and economic benefits, and enables us to meet the needs of existing and future residents.

The key to efficient use of any of our natural resources is old-fashioned common sense. Instead of taking our water supplies for granted, think about how much water your family uses every day, and actively look for ways to use it more efficiently. That means fixing leaky faucets as well as taking shorter showers!

Efficiency Programs Across the Country...

Efforts to promote the more efficient use of water are underway at regional, state and national levels designed to prevent pollution and reduce demands on the nation's water and energy infrastructure.

As part of the Environmental Protection Agency's long-term efforts, the agency has created WAVE -- Water Alliances for Voluntary Efficiency -- a non-regulatory water-efficiency partnership to encourage communities, businesses, and institutions to reduce water consumption.

The EPA points out that the lodging industry alone could save 32 billion gallons annually -- that's enough water to supply 250,000 average-sized households. The related energy savings could reach one trillion btu's per year!

Efficiency Begins At Home...

Let's face it...America uses more water per person than any other country on earth. We have the luxury to drink it, bathe in it, and turn it on almost any time we want.

We live in a water-intensive economy. Did you know that you can refill an 8 oz. glass of water approximately 15,000 times for what it would cost you to buy a six-pack of soft drinks? It takes 36,000 gallons of water to produce one automobile -- enough water for a family of four to bathe, brush their teeth, and wash clothes for more than nine months. And, a one-year supply of food for one person requires more than 1.5 million gallons of pure water to produce!

About 6.8 billion gallons of water each day are used in this country just to flush toilets. One leaky toilet can waste more than 20,000 gallons of water a year. Experts suggest that one in every five toilets leak.

When a toilet leaks, the clean water in the tank slowly seeps into the bowl. Since the

bowl water always must stay at the same level, clean water drains into the sewer pipes without ever having been used.

If you hear water "running" or you have to jiggle the handle after flushing, your toilet may have a tank leak. Here's how to check.

Take the lid off the tank and flush the toilet. As the tank starts to fill up, drop a couple of drops of food coloring into the tank (not the toilet bowl). Wait about ten minutes and then check the toilet bowl. If any of the food coloring has found its way into the bowl, you have a tank leak. Don't ignore the problem. Repairing the leak may not be too difficult, and do-it-yourselfers can get help and instructions from the local home improvement center.

How Much is Enough?

During the summer months, between 50 and 80 percent of the water used by households is used outside. to water grass and plants. Experts say that most lawns get twice the amount of water they need, and that an inch of water per week will keep a lawn green and healthy. If lawns and shrubs get a good soaking less frequently (instead of a sprinkling every day), their roots are encouraged to grow downward in search of water.

Another way to use water efficiently in landscaping is to select ground coverings and plants that are native to our area. They are used to the heat and require little water or maintenance to stay healthy.

Learn to use water more efficiently. Use your head instead of your garden hose!