



Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

Your Residential Utility Consumer Advocate

CONSUMERS' FACT SHEET

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A Consumer's Guide to

WATER CONSERVATION



Water is our most precious resource. Ohioans use it to quench their thirst, cook their food, clean their clothes and so many other uses. In order to be able to continue to take advantage of water for these important uses, it must be used effectively and efficiently. When Ohioans use less water to accomplish the same things, it will save them money and help ensure a water supply is available for the future. The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel offers the following tips to help consumers efficiently use their water.

Why you should conserve water

- ▶ Only 1 percent of the Earth's water supply is available for drinking.
- ▶ You can survive for a month without food. You can only live for five to seven days without water.
- ▶ According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the United States uses about 408 billion gallons of water per day. To make certain that the steps you are taking to conserve water are

working, the U.S. EPA has developed the WaterSense program that strives to use water more efficiently. As part of the program, labeling specifications were created that will ensure the toilets and faucets you purchase are high-performing, water-efficient models. For more information on this program visit the EPA website at www.epa.gov/watersense.

Conserving water indoors

According to an American Waterworks Association report, a typical single family home uses approximately 69.3 gallons of water per person inside the home daily. Of all the water fixtures in the home, commodes use the most water representing 18.5 gallons per person of a family's total daily water use. Washing machines represent about 15 gallons followed by showers at 11.6 gallons, faucets at 10.9 gallons, leaks at 9.5 gallons, running a bath at 1.2 gallons and dishwashers at one gallon.

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The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), the residential utility consumer advocate, represents the interests of 4.5 million households in proceedings before state and federal regulators and in the courts.

The state agency also educates consumers about electric, natural gas, telephone and water issues.

For more information, please visit the OCC website at www.pickocc.org.



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Toilet

- ▶ One way to reduce the amount of water flushed is to fill a plastic bottle with water and an inch of sand and place it in the toilet's tank. The weight of the bottle displaces the tank water, requiring less water per flush. Be careful to avoid jamming the flushing mechanism with the bottle. Also, you may need to adjust the amount of water within the bottle. If it is too heavy, the commode will not flush.
- ▶ Avoid using the toilet as a trash can. Why waste up to seven gallons of water to flush down a tiny piece of trash?
- ▶ Consider replacing an old, inefficient toilet with a high-efficiency model. New toilets use as little as 1.28 gallons per flush. Replacing a toilet installed in a home prior to 1980 with a WaterSense model can save three people about 21,000 gallons per year and more than \$100 in water bills. To find out how much can be saved for your situation, use the WaterSense Calculator at http://epa.gov/watersense/calculate_your_water_savings.html.
- ▶ Locate and fix leaks. An easy way to test a toilet for leaks, is to place 10 drops of food coloring into the tank. Wait 15 minutes and then check the bowl. If the colored water shows up, you have a leak. A leaking toilet can waste as much as 200 gallons each day.

Shower & Bath

- ▶ Replace shower heads with a low-flow model that use no more than 2.5 gallons of water per minute.
- ▶ To find out whether you would use more water showering or taking a bath, plug the drain while you shower. Compare the final water level to your normal bath water level. Typically, a partially-filled tub is equal to a short shower.
- ▶ Take shorter showers to help conserve water.

Sink and Other Household Fixtures

- ▶ Turning off the water while you brush your teeth or wash your face will save one gallon of water per minute. Fill a glass to rinse your mouth or fill the basin to wash off your face.
- ▶ When shaving, plug up the sink and run enough water to rinse your razor instead of using running water.
- ▶ Make sure all of your faucets have an aerated or spray tap. Aerators mix air with the water to cut down on water flow.
- ▶ Make it a habit to fix faucet leaks promptly. Leaky faucets often require new washers. A leaky faucet can waste up to six gallons of water a day.
- ▶ Strive to wash only full loads of laundry. Not only is it the most efficient use of water, but it helps control electric bills. If smaller loads of laundry are necessary, adjust the water level on the washing machine accordingly.
- ▶ Avoid using the dishwasher for partial loads of dishes.

Conserving water outdoors

- ▶ The average single family home uses 50 to 70 percent of their outdoor water usage on lawn and garden maintenance.
- ▶ Water your lawn during the cooler morning hours to avoid rapid evaporation.
- ▶ Promptly repair any leaky hoses or spigots.
- ▶ Position sprinklers so that they hit the plants, not the sidewalk.
- ▶ When purchasing new trees and plants, look for those which require less water to survive.
- ▶ Use a broom instead of a hose to clean the driveway and sidewalk.
- ▶ Turn the hose off while washing your car.
- ▶ Adjust your watering schedule according to the weather. Let Mother Nature water your lawn for you.