What are the best ways to conserve water indoors?

Check your water consumption on our monthly bills for unexpected increases that may indicate a leak somewhere in your water system. A leak in a water pipe, a sticking "flapper" in a toilet tank, etc. can waste thousands of gallons of water in one month and substantially increase your bill.

You can **check our meter at your home or business to monitor your water use and for indications of a leak.** Please click here to read an electronic brochure with more information about this.

Regularly check your faucets, spigots, toilets, water pipes, washing machine and its hoses, dishwasher, etc. for leaks. In addition, check the area between the water meter and your residence or business for wet spots indicating a possible leak in the "supply" line from our meter.

- One of the simplest ways to check for leaks is to listen carefully for the sound of running water at night or another quiet time when no faucets or fixtures are in use.
- Toilets are one of the most common places for leaks. To check your toilet: put food dye in the tank, don't flush for 15 to 30 minutes and look for dye in the toilet bowl. If there is dye in the bowl, there is probably a leak in the flapper at the bottom of the tank or the "fill valve" may be leaking or malfunctioning.
- If a leak needs to be fixed or a toilet flapper needs replacement, etc. the work should be done by someone who can do the work properly. Improper work can result in water loss and waste.

If your toilets were installed before 1994, they probably use 2 to 3 times as much water as the low-flush toilets required under current plumbing codes. Toilets installed before 1980 may use 5 gallons per flush, and toilets installed from 1980 to 1994 may use 3.5 gallons per flush.

In contrast, low-flow toilets use only 1.6 gallons and the "high-efficiency" toilets now available use only 1.3 gallons per flush.

We **encourage you to consider replacing old toilets**. A new toilet may pay for itself in a few years by reducing your monthly water and sewer bills. (Please see our website information on the economics of water conservation at http://www.owasa.org/Conservation/Indoor.aspx for examples of water and dollar savings, costs and potential investment returns from replacing old, inefficient toilets.)

If you do not replace an old toilet, there are several ways to reduce its flush volume:

- Lower the water level in the toilet tank by adjusting the fill valve. (Adjustment is not possible for some types of fill valves.)
- Replace the fill valve (inside the toilet tank) with one that uses less water for flushing.

- Put a “dam” in the toilet tank to reduce the flush volume. The dam works by holding some of the water in the tank instead of letting it flow into the bowl.
- Put a bottle or other container of water in the tank. You can help keep the container stable by putting some sand in it; please make sure that the container does not interfere with operation of the flapper, etc.

If you have a business or other facility with urinals, **consider installing a waterless model. The cost can be practical where there is a high level of use.**

Consider installing faucets which operate only when they detect a hand and which shut off automatically when water is not needed.

Take short showers (5 minutes or less). Turn off the shower while you lather and scrub.

Install a low-flow showerhead with a flow rate of 2.5 gallons per minute or less. Some showerheads use as little as 1.5 gallons per minute.

Above: Low-flow showerheads

Install a faucet aerator with a flow rate of 2.5 gallons per minute or less.

Faucet aerators come in several types. The one pictured above has a simple flow control valve, and the spray direction is adjustable.

Don’t leave water running while brushing your teeth, shaving, etc.

When you plan to buy a new washer for clothes or dishes, consider buying a new high-efficiency model that saves both water and energy. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's/Department of Energy's www.energystar.gov website has information on water- and energy-efficient models such as front-loading clothes washers.

When you plan to replace water-using fixtures, look for the US Environmental Protection Agency's WaterSense label, and visit the WaterSense website, http://www.epa.gov/watersense/index.htm, for product information.

Before hot water comes through a faucet or showerhead, catch and use the lukewarm water for plants, etc.

Make sure that you know the location of and have easy access to the **water shut-off valve for your plumbing system** so that you can turn off the water quickly if you have a major leak.

Consider installing a special sensor and shut-off device that would detect a major leak in your plumbing system and turn off your water automatically even if no one is in the home or business.