

Stop wasting water by pouring it down the drain

BY SHELLY FOY

Have you ever thought about how much water you use daily just on flushing toilets, washing your hands, and taking a shower? Each time your toilet is flushed, you use 5 to 7 gallons of water, and the normal faucet flow is 3 to 5 gallons of water per minute (gpm).

The average flow rate for showerheads is 6.5 gpm, meaning a 10 minute shower would use 65 gallons of water. Did you know that a leaking toilet can use 50 - 100 gallons of water per day?

If your faucet is dripping at the rate of one drop per second, you can waste 2,700 gallons of water per year.

The National Energy Policy Act, signed by the President in 1992, addresses water conservation through fixture requirements. As of January 1, 1994, all manufacturers are required to meet the criteria listed below (*See table*).

What can you do to save water if you have old fixtures, manufactured before January 1, 1994?

- ◆ **Place a plastic bottle** in your toilet tank (dishwashing soap, juice bottles, soda bottle, etc..) Take the label off, fill with water, put the cap on and place in the tank. You can put a few stones in the bottle to weight it down. You may need to experiment with bottle size. SAVINGS: 1-2 gallons per flush.

- ◆ **Put a displacement bag** in your tank. They're available free

from some utilities or relatively inexpensive to buy at a hardware or plumbing store. Fill the bag with water and place it in the tank. SAVINGS: 1-2 gallons per flush.

- ◆ **Toilet Dams are plastic barriers** that isolate part of your tank so that the water in that section doesn't run out when you flush. Each dam can hold one gallon of water, and you can use 2 in a tank. They are also available at hardware and plumbing stores. SAVINGS: 1 gallon per flush.

By using any of these conservation methods, you can save 8-16 gallons of water per day, based on the average 8 flushes a day. Those numbers may not sound that impressive, but if you think about 56-112 gallons a week, or 2,900 -5,800 gallons a year, that's a pretty significant water savings.

And on a golf course, you can believe that your toilets are flushed more than 8 times a day. If 10,000 people were to try one of these water conservation tips, we could save 29 to 58 million gallons of water a year! Now, that's impressive.

For your older faucets which use 3-5 gallons of water per minute, you can reduce this by 50% if you attach a low-flow faucet aerator.

The aerator mixes air into the water that leaves the tap, so it may look like you're using more water, not less. Ask the hardware or plumbing stores about these aerators or other water saving devices they may have for faucets. ➡

Fixture	National Energy Act	Prior Florida Law *1	Most Existing Fixtures *2
Tank-type toilets	1.6 G/Flush	3.5 G/Flush	6.0 G/Flush
Urinals	1.0 G/Flush	N/A	2.0 G/Flush
Showerheads	2.5 GPM	3.0 GPM	6.5 GPM
Lavatory Faucets	2.0 GPM	3.0 GPM	5.0 GPM

*1 Chapter 553 Florida Statutes

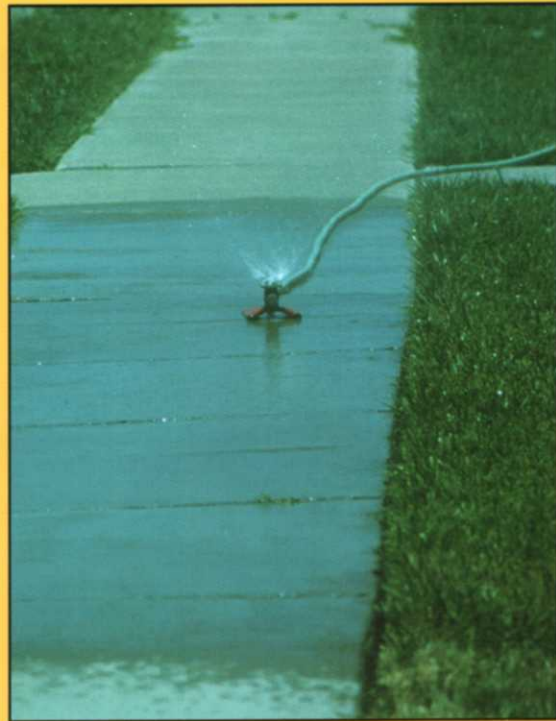
*2 Maddaus, Water Conservation, AWWA, 1987

Below are several water saving tips from the Water Management Districts:

- ◆ **Never put water down** the drain when there may be another use for it.
- ◆ **Verify that your faucets** are leak free by reading your water meter before and after a 2 hour period when no water is being used.
- ◆ **Check for toilet leaks** by adding food coloring to the tank. If you have a leak, color will appear within 30 minutes. Don't leave the food coloring in to stain your tank however.
- ◆ **Want to get rid of a dead bug** or a used tissue? Throw them in the trash, not the toilet.
- ◆ **Take shorter showers.** Replace your showerheads with the ultra low volume version.
- ◆ **Be sure your irrigation system** isn't watering cart paths, roads, etc.
- ◆ **Make sure you have a rain sensor** device which cuts the irrigation cycle in case of rain.
- ◆ **Mulch to retain** moisture in the soil.
- ◆ **Plant native and/or drought** tolerant grasses, ground covers, shrubs and trees.

Since water demands are different in each district, check with your local utilities, municipalities and local Water Management District to see if they offer incentive programs for upgrading or retro-fitting your current fixtures.

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