Water Conservation is Everyone's Business!

In Texas, our conventional fresh-water supplies are already 75 to 80 percent developed. That's why the more efficient use of our precious water resources through water conservation and reuse makes economic sense, both to preserve and extend limited water supplies and to save Texans real money.

The biggest potential saver is you, the water customer. Consider that even a 10 to 15 percent reduction in personal water use can save Texas' water and sewer ratepayers billions of dollars over the next 50 years. The effort to conserve water must begin now, however, with everyone's participation and support.

Here are some ways to save both water and money at home:

1. For an investment of $10 to $20, homeowners can install two **low-flow shower heads**, place dams or bottles in the toilet tank, install low-flow aerators on the faucets, and repair dripping faucets and leaking toilets. This could save the average household 10,000 to 25,000 gallons each year for a family of four, and would pay for itself in less than a year! Even more savings can be realized if good outdoor water conservation is practiced for the lawn and garden.

2. When building a new home or remodeling a bathroom, install a new **low-volume flush toilet** that uses only 1.6 gallons per flush.

3. Test toilets for leaks. Add a few drops of food coloring to the water in the toilet tank, but do not flush the toilet. Watch to see if the coloring appears in the bowl within a few minutes. It if does, the toilet has a silent leak that needs to be repaired.

4. Use some type of **toilet tank displacement device** to reduce the volume of water in the tank, but still provide enough for flushing. (Bricks are NOT recommended because they eventually crumble and could damage the working mechanisms.) Displacement devices are not recommended with new low-volume flush toilets.

5. Do not use hot water when cold water will do. Period.

6. In the kitchen...

■ Scrape the dishes clean instead of rinsing them before placing them in the dishwasher.

■ Only run the dishwasher with a full load. This will save water, energy, detergent and money.

■ Keep a container of drinking water in the refrigerator. Running water from the tap until it is cool enough to drink is wasteful.

■ Use a small pan of cold water when cleaning vegetables rather than letting the water run over them.

■ Use less water for cooking. Not only does it save water, but also food is more nutritious when the vitamins and minerals are not "boiled" out of them and poured down the sink with the extra water.

■ Always keep water conservation in mind. Avoid doing wasteful things like making a huge pot of coffee if you're only going to drink one or two cups, or even throwing away a glass full of ice after it cooled a few swallows of water. These things may not seem like much, but they add up over time.

7. In the Laundry...

■ Did you know that 32 to 59

gallons of water are required for each washing machine load? Wash only full loads of clothes when using your washing machine.

■ Use the lowest possible water level setting on the washing machine.

■ Use cold water whenever possible. This saves energy, too, and conserves the hot water for other uses. This is also better for most of today's fabrics.

8. Appliances and Plumbing...

■ When purchasing new appliances, check the water requirements of various models and brands. Some use less water than others.

■ Check water line connections and faucets for leaks. A slow drip can waste as much as 170 gallons of water EACH DAY, or 5,000 gallons a month. This will increase your water bill.

■ Repair leaky faucets promptly. It is easy to do, it costs very little and can make a substantial savings in your water bills.

■ Make sure that the line from the water meter to your house is free of leaks. To check, turn off all indoor and outdoor faucets and water-using appliances. The water meter should be read at 10 to 20 minute intervals. If it continues to run or turn, a leak probably exists and needs to be located.

■ Insulate all hot water pipes to reduce the delays (and wasted water) experienced while waiting for the water to heat up.

■ Set the thermostat on the hot water heater at a reasonable level. Extremely hot settings waste water (because it takes some extra cold water to make it usable) and energy and can even cause minor burns. ●