Spring/Summer 2013

WATERWORKS

Provided as a public service for our customers and neighbors

FORT BEND COUNTY
Municipal Utility District No. 25

THE SOLUTION TO POLLUTION?

YOU!

SEWER SYSTEMS NEED FAT-FREE DIETS TOO!

The medical community has spoken loud and clear: less grease and fat consumed by humans helps make humans healthier. However, did you know that the same fat-free mandate contributes to healthier sewer systems and water supplies?

Oil and grease pollution from urban storm waters is an important and growing water quality and sewer system problem. Rivers and groundwater that were once pure have become polluted and life threatening. Grease, fats and oil contribute to blocked sanitary sewer systems leading to sewage overflows. The main culprits are improper disposal of fat, oil and grease from food preparation, which create back-ups and other problems in sewer systems. While residents and food preparation facilities may find it inconvenient to dispose properly of grease, fat and oil, **everyone** will find it inconvenient and expensive to unclog blockages and cleanup spills.

"Municipalities are under great pressure to better manage the wastewater they collect, treat and discharge to the environment. Hence, to achieve the main objective, cleaner discharges and protection of the receiving waters and sediments, effective pollution control

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devices are needed," said T. Duncan Ellison, executive director of the Canadian Water and Waste Water Association (CWWA) at the Air & Waste Management Association (AWMA) Annual Conference and Exhibition in Anaheim, California on June 18, 2003. Water discharges from industrial, commercial and other facilities are governed by a variety of federal, provincial and municipal laws. Wastewater managers, businesses that generate fats, oil and grease and residents must be aware of new standards regarding prohibited waste substances. The best method for avoiding grease and fat in the sewer systems is to NEVER pour grease, fat, oil down the sink or floor drains. Instead, place cooking oils, grease and fats into a can or container with a secure lid and dispose of properly as designated by your community regulations or the county/regional Environmental Protection Agency.

STORM WATER SYSTEMS NEED PROTECTION TOO!

In most urban and suburban areas, your street connects to downstream lakes, wetlands and streams through the storm sewer system. Water runs off your street and yard rapidly through storm sewers carrying pollutants collected along the way, directly into our lakes and rivers. In essence, we all live on the waterfront and have a duty to protect future water sources. Storm water runoff becomes a problem when it picks up and carries debris, chemicals, dirt and other pollutants as it flows or when it causes flooding and erosion of stream banks or when people deliberately contaminate storm sewers by illegally dumping hazardous substances and chemicals into storm sewers. Pesticides, fertilizers, oil and soap are harmful in any quantity. Sediment from construction, bare soil, or agricultural land, or pet waste, grass clippings and leaves harm creeks, rivers and lakes in sufficient quantities.

Various human activities like watering, car washing, and malfunctioning septic tank can also put water onto the land surface. Here, the runoff that carries pollutants to creeks, rivers and lakes.

Polluted runoff generally happens anywhere people use or alter the land. For example, in developed areas, none of the water that falls on hard surfaces like roofs, driveways, parking lots or roads can seep into the ground. The impervious surfaces create large amounts of runoff that picks up pollutants. The runoff flows from gutters and storm drains to streams. Runoff not only pollutes but also erodes stream banks. The mix of pollution and eroded dirt muddies the water and causes problems downstream. Polluted storm water runoff is the number one cause of water pollution in Texas. Polluted water creates numerous costs to the public and to wildlife.

"We all live downstream."

Communities that use surface water for their drinking supply must pay much more to clean up polluted water than clean water. Polluted water hurts the wildlife in creeks, streams, rivers and lakes. Dirt from erosion, also called sediment, covers up fish habitats while fertilizers can cause too much algae to grow, which also hurts wildlife by using up the oxygen they need to survive. Soaps hurt fish gills and

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THREE WATER EFFICIENCY TIPS THAT REALLY PAY OFF!

1 — MONITOR RESIDENTIAL IRRIGATION

According to the Texas Water Resources Institute, Texas A&M University, during summer months, lawn and landscape irrigation may account for 40 to 60 percent of residential water consumption. Homeowners frequently ask, "How much water is enough?" A typical response has been that an inch of water a week – from rainfall or irrigation — is sufficient. Experts now suggest, however, that even that amount is more than is actually needed to sustain Texas turf. Research reveals that many homeowners think it is necessary to run their sprinkler systems at least three times a week to maintain the desired lawn and landscaped areas.

"Not so," say Texas AgriLife Extension experts. Based on their research, It is more important to apply water so that it will soak into the soil… not run across the surface and into the gutter. Make sure your irrigation system is correctly designed, installed and maintained, so it can help minimize the amount of water you use and still keep your lawn and landscape looking healthy.

Switch your irrigation controller settings to enable CYCLE AND SOAK — set the system to come on one time (around 2 am) and run for 7-8 minutes, and a second time (around 4 am) to run for another 7-8 minutes. (See page 6 for additional information)

#2 – FIND AND FIX LEAKS

Pay attention to your indoor water usage. Check routinely for leaks…leaking faucets, leaking toilets, leaking appliances, leaky outdoor faucets, and leaks in the irrigation system. Learn how to check your water meter to determine if you may have a leak.

Watch your water bill…suspect a leak if you have any sudden increase in usage without any change in your usual patterns. Studies have shown that more than 10 percent of the water used in the home can be due to leaks…which is serious money down the drain. Fixing leaky faucets and plumbing joints can save 20 gallons a day for each one stopped.

The single greatest water waster *inside the home* is a **leaking TOILET**…a leak of one gallon every six minutes – not an unusual amount – adds up to ten gallons an hour, or 240 gallons per day! A leaking toilet can double the total monthly water usage by the whole household. Unfortunately, many toilet leaks are silent and happen without anyone noticing; sending lots of your dollars down the drain, as well! Most toilet leaks involve poorly seated tank balls, worn valves, or other minor components that are relatively easy to fix.

ALSO IN THE BATHROOM…have you installed water saving or flow restricting shower heads? Replacing old ones can save 500 to 800 gallons of water a month. And, how long are your showers? Even a one or two minute reduction in time can save up to 700 gallons a month. Multiply that by the number of people in your household and now you're talking some serious water savings! Something as simple as turning off the water while brushing your teeth or shaving can save another 3-4 gallons each time.

#3 – REPLACE THIRSTY APPLIANCES

Depending on how old your appliances are, you might realize a significant savings in the long run — in both water and energy usage — if you replace them. The **washing machine**, for example, is the second largest water user in your home, accounting for as much as 22 percent of the total residential water use. Today, there is a good variety of high-efficiency (HE) clothes washers on the market, many with the front loading drums that require only 27 gallons or less per load.

Today's more efficient **dishwasher** models use only about 7 gallons per load, or half the water earlier models did. Use them with full loads only; minimize pre-washing by scraping off food using a utensil not water; make sure dishes are positioned to get good water flow during the cycle; and select the shortest practical run cycle.

Garbage disposals use a surprisingly large amount of water as they grind solid food waste into small particles that water washes down the drain. Consider composting your food scraps… this saves water twice.

Watch for WaterSense. When you shop for plumbing fixtures, look for the EPA's WaterSense label, which means they meet strict criteria for efficiency and performance. Since the program's inception in 2006, WaterSense has helped consumers save a cumulative 287 billion gallons of water and over $4.7 billion in water and energy bills!

Remember, the water we conserve today can serve us tomorrow! ♦

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fish skin, and other chemicals damage plants and animals when they enter the water. Why should you care? Streams and creeks feed into rivers, lakes and eventually the ocean.

We all drink water, so we are all affected when our water is polluted. When water treatment costs rise, the price of drinking water goes up. Additionally, if you like to fish, swim or boat, you may have heard or been affected by advisories warning you not to swim, fish or boat in a certain area because of unhealthy water or too much algae. Shellfish like clams, oysters, and shrimp cannot be harvested from polluted waters, so anyone that enjoys these foods or makes a living from the shellfish industry is affected. Money made from tourism and water recreation is adversely impacted, as are businesses and homes flooded by storm water runoff.

When we pollute our water, everyone is affected! Polluted storm water runoff is a leading cause of impairment to the nearly 40 percent of surveyed U.S. water bodies which do not meet water quality standards. Over land or via storm sewer systems, polluted runoff is discharged directly into local water bodies. Water pollution can result in the destruction of fish, wildlife, and aquatic life habitats; a loss in aesthetic value; and threats to public health due to contaminated food, drinking water supplies, and recreational waterways.

The Environmental Protection Agency introduced The Federal Clean Water Act, which requires towns, cities, military bases, special districts and municipalities to take steps to reduce polluted storm water runoff to include enforcement action and financial penalties for failure to comply. Residents who violate Rate Order and other regulatory laws can be fined up to $5,000.00 per day as well as costs for remediation for violating laws that protect our storm water systems. However, the bigger cost is the potential threat to human life and safety.

The District provides a number for reporting those who contaminate our storm water system. Thus, if you see anyone in the act of dumping hazardous chemicals, grease, paint, etc into District storm water drains, please call 1-866-414-9950. Think about it; the only source for water is **WATER** so the life you save, by reporting violations, could be your own or that of your children!

Read more about this critically important issue in the article beginning on page 5.

COMMUNITY HEARTLINES UPDATE

Neighbors helping neighbors is the cornerstone of the District's Community Heartlines program. The life sustaining programs include quarterly blood drives and bi-annual food drives.

1. The May 2013 Food Drive was a resounding success, thanks to the participation of our caring residents. The District extends a heartfelt thank you to everyone that participated! Food collection results by subdivision are as follows:

   1st Place: Orchard Lakes Estates
   2nd Place: Stratford Park
   3rd Place: Pheasant Creek

2. Food drives are scheduled for November 2013, when food pantry shelves are in dire need. Watch for the flyers with collection bags distributed throughout the District.

FACTS ABOUT NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION

What do motor oil, lawn fertilizers, cigarette butts, grass clippings and pet poop all have in common? They all contribute to what the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) warns is the number one threat to our drinking water supplies…Nonpoint Source Pollution. Today, most oil pollution in North America's coastal waters comes not from leaking oil tankers or oil rigs, but from countless oil leaks from the more than 235 million cars currently on the road in this country. Drip, drop…cars make daily oil deposits on roadways, parking lots and driveways and neighborhood streets. When it rains, stormwater runoff carries with it globs and sheens of oil from paved surfaces into the storm drains…on to creeks and streams… and ultimately into bays and estuaries…and finally into the sea or Gulf of Mexico, in our case here in Texas.

Here are some more statistics about this sneaky kind of water pollution that will surprise you. Contrary to popular belief, most water pollution does not come from illegal dumping of chemicals and toxic waste. In fact, that accounts for less than ten percent of it. Forty percent of water pollution originates with automotive fluids washing off paved surfaces from normal rainfall and cleaning activities.

Twenty five years ago, most of the "point-source" pollution -- the kind where the source was easily identified – was eliminated when industries and wastewater treatment facilities cleaned up their discharge to public waters to comply with the Clean Water Act or face crippling fines. Today, most water pollution comes from far more benign looking causes – pastures, construction sites, parking lots, housetops, lawns and driveways.

Surely this can't be legal? You bet it's not! But, since the pollution comes from so many diverse sources, that may also vary by season, it is often difficult to determine the exact point of origin. And, for another thing, consider who causes this pollution…it's you and me, doing things we do every day…without thinking about a more global impact. The local stream is probably the last thing on your mind when you pull the car up into the driveway to give it a good washing, right? And, once or twice a year when you figure it's time to give the lawn a good fertilizing…that doesn't bring anything other than images of nice green grass to mind, does it?

Well, let's get one thing straight. Do you know the difference between a storm drain and a sewer? ***Sewer drains*** collect water from outside our homes and commercial establishments and take it – untreated – directly to streams, creeks and rivers, ***Sewers*** on the other hand, collect water from inside homes and businesses and carry it to treatment plants, where it is cleaned before being released back into nature. This is important information.

Only rain in the storm drain...

Our pets need exercise too, but please, SCOOP THAT POOP.

As a courtesy to your neighbors and the environment, take a "pick up bag" with you when walking your dog.

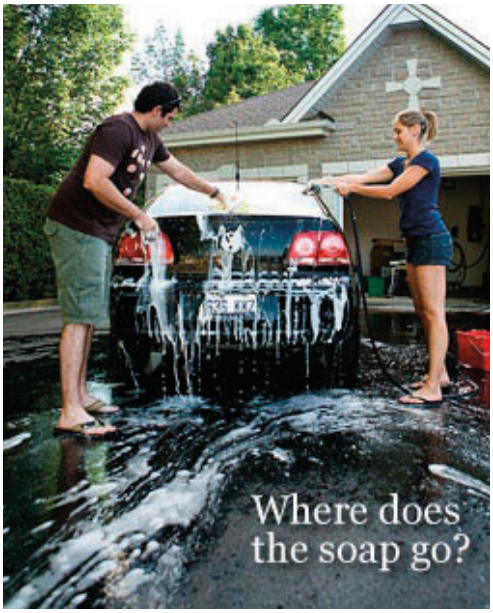
Much has been written about the many causes of nonpoint-source pollution -- lawn fertilizer, silt from construction projects, hazardous household chemicals, and pesticides. There have been major public information campaigns about the impact of 'pet poop' on local streams and waterways. People are getting the message from homeowner associations and parks that if their dog makes a 'deposit' in a public place, the owner has a responsibility to *scoop the poop* and deposit it in the trash or in receptacles provided. How bad a problem can this be, you ask? In the densely populated Washington, D.C. suburb of Arlington, Virginia, there's a community park (Four Mile Run) where scientists estimate that dogs deposit more than 5,000 pounds of poop each day!

There are two other MAJOR sources of nonpoint source pollution, however, that haven't received the same kind of attention: powerwashers and car washing. Powerwashers are powerful cleaning machines that use water under pressure to make quick work of cleaning commercial parking structures and asphalt surfaces as well as residential driveways, patios and homes. Powerwashers of all kinds generate approximately 10,000 to 20,000 gallons of wastewater for every 100,000 to 150,000 square feet of surface being cleaned.

Since the largest source of water pollution comes from city streets, parking lots and neighborhoods, we need to take a closer look at powerwashing. When the weather warms up, on any given weekend you can hear the distinct sound of the gasoline-generated power washers in the neighborhood. Residents are washing driveway oils and deposits along with molds and other patio stains and discolorations right down the drain...the storm drain that is. If the noise alone weren't aggravating enough, rivers of waste -- a veritable cocktail of toxic deposits -- trickle down into the streets, stream along gutters to the nearest storm drain where it begins its journey to the sea. Disgusting, isn't it?

There's more. The aggressive cleaning agents that are used in the commercial powerwashing endeavors -- such as muriatic acid and degreasers -- are incredibly toxic. And simple motor oil contains lead, copper, cadmium and chromium -- all toxic to humans and fish and wildlife -- and yet they race ahead of the powerwash blast of water into the storm drains. If it is on the surface, the powerwash jet of water pushes it into the storm drain -- a collection which could ultimately end up in your drinking water supply. Seventy six percent of our waterways are too polluted to fish or even swim in safely. Forty percent of water pollution is from automotive fluids washing off paved surfaces from normal rainfall and from cleaning activities.

And then there is the simple matter of washing the family car. Just pull it up in the driveway, get



out the hose and a bucket of soapy water and you're ready to begin. Well, that's what we've done since the day we got that much-anticipated drivers license. Things have changed over the years, however. Today we're paying a whole lot more attention to how we impact the environment -- to sustaining our natural resources and protecting finite potable water supplies. So, what has that got to do with washing the car?

Think of it this way: all the soap scum and oily gunk that runs down your driveway while you're washing the car goes into the gutter and subsequently into a storm drain that runs directly – that is without any treatment whatsoever – into our lakes, rivers, creeks and streams…polluting everything along the way. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to realize that this ultimately becomes an enormous problem, and it is not too difficult to understand why it might become the top pollution problem in the country.

Everyone knows that clean water is important to all of us; having access to clean water is of primary importance for our health and well-being, and to a healthy economy, too. Not only does it supply a habitat for marine life, but clean water provides recreational opportunities, drinking water for our homes, businesses and manufacturing, and even provides the means to generate electricity.

No one is saying, "*Don't wash the car!*" but it matters how and where you choose to do it. The avereage driveway car wash uses about 116 gallons of water! Commercial car washes, on the other hand, use about 60 percent less water in the entire washing process than a home wash uses just for rinsing! Commercial car washes generally recycle the water, as well.

That's just the *quantity* of water used…now consider the soap. Most soap contains phosphates and other chemicals that may be harmful to fish and marine life. Phosphates cause excess algae to grow that not only looks bad, but smells awful and harms water quality. As algae decays, it uses up oxygen in the water that fish need to survive.

So, how do you balance your desire to have a nice shiny automobile in your driveway with your interest in protecting the environment? Start by learning as much as you can about nonpoint source pollution…and the things you can do to help stop it. Make a commitment to do everything you can to minimize the risk that your activities will endanger the environment. When washing the car, use soap sparingly, pour the bucket of soapy water into the sink, not the storm drain; and consider washing the car while it is parked on a grassy area, not the driveway. Best of all choices, have your car washed commercially – at a business that uses state-of-the-art environmentally friendly equipment and processes… and recycles the water, too.

THE OPERATOR'S CORNER

- Lift Stations 9 and 10 are complete and online. Lift stations 11 and 12 will soon be under construction (Windsor Estates).
- The construction of the new wastewater treatment plant No.2 is complete!
- Pools and/or sprinkler systems are required, by District statutes, to have a backflow device installed and, once installed, the device must be inspected by one of the District's operator's to ensure the device meets state regulations and is properly installed.
- Avoid spraying pesticides or fertilizers within 50 feet of any storm drainage structure (unless stricter limits apply).
- Follow all manufacturers' recommendations for mixing, applying, cleaning-up, storage and handling of pesticides and fertilizers.

IRRIGATION 101...

Top 5 things to do if you have an irrigation system

How often does your irrigation system come on when your grass doesn't need any water? You keep reminding yourself to check the system controller, but it just never seems to get done. "It's not hurting the grass," you think, "so what's the harm?" Besides the obvious answer that it's wasting water and money, too much water actually does harm your lawn. Overwatering encourages turf to grow shallow roots which cause the grass to stress if water isn't available. And, if your irrigation system is still on during winter months, add the fact that native grasses like St. Augustine are DORMANT during that time of year, and need no more water than Mother Nature provides.

It might be true that everything is bigger in Texas…but that doesn't have to include your water bill! Recent reports based on actual irrigation system evaluations in Montgomery, Harris and Ft. Bend counties has demonstrated that at least 90 percent of residents who have irrigation systems water too often…and 43 percent of that water runs off into the gutter and ultimately into the storm drain.

There are a number of things that you can do to maximize the use of your irrigation system and avoid wasting water and your money. One thing you might consider is to adopt a "conservative" watering cycle…using your house number, water no more than twice a week on an odd/even schedule. You might choose Saturday and Wednesday for odd numbers and Sunday and Thursday for even numbers. But, skip a day if your grass doesn't need watering – even if it is a "watering" day.

Here are some of the most important things you can to do make the best, most water-efficient use of your irrigation system:

1. Irrigation System Leaks

You might have heard folks saying that the black gold of tomorrow may very well be blue…*water*. As the price of this precious commodity continues to go up, it is important that your irrigation system is not needlessly "bubbling" water up from the ground, as oil did in the TV comedy, "Beverly Hillbillies". Unlike Jed Clampett's windfall of oil money, you'll be the one paying for all that wasted water!

What are some signs of an irrigation system leak? How about water running off your yard and into the street if a pipe is completely broken? Or maybe an area of your yard is staying wetter than any other spot, even if your controller is turned off? Perhaps your faucets have low pressure when your irrigation system is running? A typical residential 5/8" or 3/4" water meter will flow about 13 gallons of water per minute. Imagine a broken pipe leaking all day while you are away from home. After 8 hours, there could be 6,240 gallons of water wasted down the drain. Since your system may be running while you are asleep or away from home, the problems may have gone unobserved. And, unfortunately, when your system is underground it is difficult to find leaks until they appear. So, if you see these potential problem areas don't delay in scheduling a professional audit/evaluation of your system, and then repair any pipe leaks or broken, leaky heads that are confirmed.

2. Timing is EVERYTHING!

In addition to adopting a water-efficient watering schedule, set the system controller to complete the watering cycle before 4:00 am to avoid the peak demand of water for other household uses – like family showers, kitchen chores, and the use of laundry appliances. This early morning program also prevents excessive evaporation that occurs in strong sunlight, and is a great time for a technique called **"Cycle and Soak"**. This method applies water slowly so the soil actually can absorb it. Each lawn has different components – soil quality and content -- but the key here is to water only as long as it takes to get moisture down into the soil, and that could be as little as 10 minutes or as many as 20 depending on the soil. It will take at least 30 minutes for the water to percolate into the soil, so wait an hour to schedule the

next cycle. Do a test run; turn on a zone to discover at what length of time water is no longer soaking into the soil, and begins to run off. Use that amount of time to set the first programmed "cycle". Set the timer to come on again after an hour, to deliver a similar amount of water. Technically, while you may be watering more often, the system is delivering the same amount of water…only it is being utilized more efficiently!

3. Hydrozone your Yard…

When it comes to water, shrub areas need a different amount than the turf areas. Shrubs or turf exposed to afternoon sun need more water than those protected by the shade. Yet when it comes to watering their yard, most people water everything the same. We tend to put the same amount of water on the turf as we do on the flower beds.

Separating different plant materials with different exposures so they may be watered independent of one another is called *hydrozoning*. Since January of 2009, the rules of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) require all new irrigation systems to be *hydrozoned*. Applying only the amount of water required by the plant material versus watering everything the same can save up to 21,300 gallons of water annually on a typical residential lot.

4. Overspray – WHAT A WASTE!

The TCEQ rules governing irrigation in Texas do not allow spraying water over impervious surfaces such as walls, fences, sidewalks, and streets. The reason for this rule is simple – it just wastes water. It may cost more to design and install a system that does not spray onto these surfaces, but in the long run, having an efficient irrigation system that conserves our most precious natural resource is worth it.

Here's an example: if your sprinkler system (set to apply one inch of water) throws water over the sidewalks during that cycle, it will waste around 220 gallons of water on your sidewalks. This water will run down the concrete and into the gutter, or it will run off into the soil where it will over-water the area and deep-percolate below the plant root zone where it is no longer useful. Either way, it is a waste of valuable water resources.

Another important point to consider is that watering your lawn is like running a marathon. You need to train the roots to grow or "run" deeper into the soil. If you water every day, the roots will stay near the surface where the water is. There is no reason for them to grow deeper or run longer. By skipping days between watering periods, the roots will begin to grow deeper to reach more water. Nutrients are important for the plants as well. Aerate the soil to provide oxygen, and add compost for nutrition.

The deeper the roots grow, the longer your grass can go between waterings. Even during the dog days of the summer, your grass should be able to easily go three to four days without needing water. If the roots are deep enough, you can water as little as once a week.

5. The Effects of Pressure on Irrigation Systems

Most of us experience the effects of pressure from time to time -- at home, on the job, even on the playing field. And just like people, irrigation systems do not perform well when the pressure is too high. Most spray systems operate best with 30 pounds of pressure per square inch (psi) at the nozzle.

According to the Rain Bird Corporation, for every five pounds of pressure *over the recommended operating pressure at the nozzle*, your system will waste 6 percent to 8 percent of the irrigation water. It is very common for a spray system to operate between 40 psi and 50 psi at the nozzle. This excessive pressure results in a waste of 16 percent to 29 percent of the water delivered through the system. For a typical residential irrigation system, this waste will be equivalent to 28,990 gallons to 52,500 gallons of water annually. This can usually be remedied by adding some type of pressure regulation to your system. Consider having your irrigation system evaluated by a Licensed Irrigator to determine how you can conserve water wasted due to high pressure at the nozzle.

Remember, when all is said and done… irrigation systems don't waste water – people do. Pass Irrigation 101 with flying colors! Get acquainted with – and take control of – your irrigation system controller. Check the system regularly for leaks, broken heads, and tell-tale signs of overspray on sidewalks, fences, or the street. Here's a case where ignorance is most definitely NOT bliss…what you don't know about your irrigation system (how and when it works) can cost you money and waste valuable water resources. ♦

The Great Bottled Water Debate…

No matter which side of the bottled water debate you're on, there are essentially two topics under the microscope…

One, is it "better" than tap water? And the second topic has to do with the bottle itself. Let's consider these issues and points of view.

A freelance writer/environmentalist from Canada pointed out recently that, "*Our lives are filled with unnecessary, wasteful and idiotic things to buy. But few are as stupid as bottled water….few products are as downright silly. Folks who work in advertising always cite it as the best example that proves you can persuade people to buy anything…as long as it has a spiffy logo and a slick name. You can even convince people to pay 1000 times more for the same product that comes out of their tap for free.*"

Wow…that's pretty hard to argue with. In fairness to the pro-bottled water drinkers, however, many say they just don't like the taste of their tap water…or that they simply have to drink a lot of water every day to stay on a special diet and the bottled water is so much more convenient to take along, etc.

Something is sure working in favor of the product… consumers are spending upwards of $100 billion a year on bottled water. Americans drink more than 30 billion gallons of bottled water annually…and that's more than coffee, milk or beer! What these water consumers may not realize is that 24 percent of the bottled water out there for sale on the grocery store shelves is TAP WATER repackaged by Coke and Pepsi…no kidding.

If you're considering cost factors alone, according to Treehugger.com, the average cost of eight glasses of water from your faucet every day would run you around $0.49 *per year*. The same amount of bottled water would cost around $1,400!

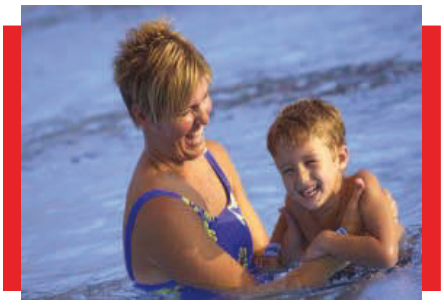
According to Ben Grumbles, the former head of the U.S. EPA's water programs, "*It's an urban myth that bottled water is safer than tap water.*" He continues to point out that the EPA requires municipalities to test water daily and validates testing to make sure that the nation's community water systems meet stringent standards. There are Food and Drug Administration standards for bottled water, too, but even bottled water officials won't claim that bottled water is healthier, or better for us. The International Bottled Water Association (IBWA) says it "*all boils down to what consumers prefer*."

Moving on to issue number two…the bottle itself. According to detractors, water bottles clog landfills and consume energy in their manufacture. Again, that's a hard statistic to argue with. The Container Recycling Institute, for example, reports that only 23 percent of plastic bottles were recycled in 2006, and the year before that, over 144 billion containers were wasted in the U.S. Only 11 states have container deposit legislation, and even those don't always cover water bottles. The Institute says that 85 percent of the water bottles end up in landfills or on the side of the road. Only 15 percent make it to be recycled. And – here's a stunning fact – the PET plastic bottles take 400 to 1000 years to degrade. Ultimately, where is all that plastic going to end up???

Here's another fact to consider…more than 17 million barrels of oil are used each year to ***create*** bottles for water. That is enough petroleum to fuel one million U.S. vehicles for an entire year, according to the Washington, D.C. based Earth Policy Institute. That's a pretty large *carbon footprint*, if you're into that sort of thing.

So, perhaps this article isn't entirely transparent about which side of the bottled water debate we're on. Our suggestion is to purchase a REFILLABLE bottle that you like, and fill it up with our excellent, top quality TAP drinking water! You'll find that this is just as portable as bottled water, but it sure costs a whole lot less! If you do this, give yourself a congratulatory pat on the back, too…for not contributing to the massive landfill problem. We thank you…and our planet thanks you.

Children Aren't Waterproof...



There is nothing quite like a refreshing dip in a swimming pool to really enjoy a hot Texas day. Swimming is an excellent form of exercise for people of all ages. Unfortunately, children under the age of five are 14 times more likely to be involved in a fatal accident in a swimming pool than in an automobile.

Hot weather is around a long time in Texas -- and recreation usually involves water activities of one kind or another, so one of the first things parents are concerned about is helping their children learn to respect the water... whether they are in it, on it, or just around it.

Basic water safety should be learned by people of all ages, because simply learning to swim is no guarantee that you will never be involved in an aquatic accident.

American Red Cross statistics indicate that 50 percent of pool accidents involving young children could be prevented by adequate fencing and barriers. Local laws and regulations call for all outdoor pools -- public and private -- to be enclosed by a fence at least four feet high, and specify that they must have self-closing, self-latching devices to keep out adventuresome youngsters.

The vast majority of people who drown ***never intended to get in the water in the first place***. Most were dressed for activities *near the water*, but not *in* it. They might have been in a boat, on a pier or dock, or playing on the deck of a swimming pool when an accident occurred. Drownings are often called "silent" accidents, because they usually happen quickly, without a cry for help.

Experts insist that no one -- of any age -- should EVER swim alone. It only takes a minute for a serious accident to occur, so parents should never take their eyes off children around the water...not even for a second.

Youngsters are naturally curious about a sparkling body of water -- anything from a giant puddle to a mighty ocean will do -- and this attraction often stays with us for life. A sliding glass door that successfully separates a child from a backyard pool one day...can be opened by young fingers the next. Never take barriers for granted; constantly check to see that they are secure and prevent unwanted access to a pool area.

Sadly, the Consumer Product Safety Commission predicts that this summer alone, more than 300 children under the age of five will drown in home swimming pools. While thousands more will be rescued in time to prevent drowning, many will suffer serious and permanent brain damage.

Minimize the risk that you or someone you love will be involved in an aquatic accident by following some simple, common-sense rules, and make your backyard pool safer for everyone who uses it.

- Make sure children learn how to float on their back and how to reach the side if they should ever fall into a pool. Teach them how critical it is to YELL FOR HELP immediately!
- Make sure your pool or spa is inaccessible to unsupervised children. Be sure there are no footholds or handholds in any fence or barrier that will allow a child to climb over.
- Doors to pool areas should be locked and protected with audible alarms and out-of-reach locks.
- Keep rescue equipment and a telephone nearby whenever the pool is in use.
- Flotation devices will not keep a child safe in the water; don't rely on them.
- Insist that all who use the pool follow some strict rules: No running; no pushing others under water; no diving except in designated areas with adult permission and supervision.
- Anyone who supervises youngsters around water should learn CPR and be able to administer it at once. Seconds count in preventing death or brain injury -- which can occur in two to six minutes after oxygen is cut off from the brain.
- Diving into the shallow end of a pool can result in a paralyzing spinal injury. Simply do not allow diving from the side of the diving board, slide or other pool equipment, or diving through an inner tube or other pool toy.

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Municipal Utility District No. 25
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BILLING CHAT LINE

Helpful hints from the Billing Department to improve your bill paying experience:

1. Call the office to enroll in E-Notification! Once enrolled, you receive an e-mail notification when the new bill is available for viewing online.
2. You have more options for paying your bill than ever before! Pay Online, Pay by Phone, Pay at the District Office, Place your payment in the drop box located at the District office or inside the Pheasant Creek Shell Station, Pay your bill at the Fiesta Grocery Store at Hwy.6 and Bellaire, Enroll in ACH payment option, Pay by Debit or Credit Cards or by Electronic Check.
3. IMPORTANT REMINDER: Residents using bank online payments need to know that the bank cuts a check and sends the payment as a paper check via regular postal mail delivery to our office. Allow up to ten days for delivery if you use online banking services because bank online payments ARE NOT ACH TRANSFERS.
4. The District mails bills monthly. Your Water bill payment is due on the 24th of every month. HOWEVER, if you do not receive your bill, call us! We are happy to send a copy of your bill or you can view your bill online www.waterdistrict25.com
5. Want a quick way to earn credits to your monthly bill? Participate in one of the Water Conservation Rebate options offered by the District (view options on the District website or call our office for details.)

Now, tell me again...

Exactly how much water do you think your lawn needs?

Nope...not even close. There's no need to use your lawn irrigation system more than twice a week -- only more often if there is no rainfall for an extended period of time. Frequent watering creates a shallow root system that requires excessive water during hot, dry periods.

If you have an irrigation system, plan to complete your watering by 4:30 am, well before water demand is at its peak. If you move the sprinklers around yourself, arrange to water after the morning peak demand time but before the sun gets too high in the sky. You can use water more efficiently and still maintain a terrific looking yard.