



Facts About...

WATER CONSERVATION

Why Is Water Conservation Important?

Marylanders have access to an abundance of water much of the time, and we're accustomed to having water available at the twist of a faucet. U.S. citizens use approximately **35 billion gallons** of water a day for household, industrial, and agricultural uses. Unlike the dry western areas of the country, in this area we often overlook the importance of conserving water. As our population continues to grow, however, demands on our precious water resources increase. Over the past thirty years, individual water use has increased 70%, and that figure is likely to rise even more unless we take action now. In order to ensure adequate water resources for our future needs, we must put conservation measures into effect now.

Practicing water conservation on a regular basis can prevent or postpone the building of new water supply infrastructure. When utilities are able to reduce demand, they can frequently extend the life of existing infrastructure, saving their consumers the cost of building or renovating. Conservation can also reduce the amount of water that needs to be processed by wastewater treatment plants, again preserving infrastructure and also reducing the amount of waste discharged to streams and rivers. Finally, sound water use practices can make us more resilient during times of drought, negating the need for mandatory interventions.

What is Maryland Doing To Promote Water Conservation?

The State of Maryland has developed a three-pronged approach to promote water conservation across the State. This action plan addresses water conservation in three areas: State facilities, water utilities, and public education and outreach.

State Facilities

On May 24, 2001, Governor Glendening issued an Executive Order requiring all State facilities to conduct water use audits and take actions to reduce their water use. The Executive Order is intended to make State facilities a model for Maryland's citizens and for other States. Any building that is owned, leased, or managed by the State will be required to reduce their water use by 10% by the year 2010.

Water Utilities

MDE has asked the State's largest water utilities (together serving more than 3.5 million individuals) to conduct audits to evaluate the amount of residential water used per person. They will be asked to develop and implement a water conservation plan including customer education and possible incentive and rebate offers.

Public Education

The Maryland Department of the Environment has undertaken a public awareness initiative to educate Maryland's citizens about the importance of conserving water.

Tips for Saving Water Inside the Home

Approximately sixty percent of total household water supply is used inside the home in three main areas: the kitchen, the bathroom and the laundry room. Follow these tips to reduce water use indoors:

- ◆ Make sure all faucets are tightly turned off and not leaking: *A leaking faucet could waste up to 4,000 gal/year*
- ◆ Replace old faucets with new water-efficient models or install aerators to reduce flow

In the Kitchen

- ◆ Run dishwasher only when full
- ◆ Consider water use when purchasing a new dishwasher: *New water and energy efficient models use 20% less water*
- ◆ Defrost food in refrigerator instead of using running water: *A running faucet uses about a gallon of water per minute*
- ◆ Use a dishpan or plug the sink when hand-washing dishes
- ◆ Don't prerinse dishes before loading into dishwasher
- ◆ Keep a container of water in the refrigerator rather than waiting for cold water from faucet

In the Bathroom

- ◆ Install low flow toilets or toilet dams
- ◆ Test all toilets regularly for leaks: *A leaking toilet could waste up 100 gal/day*
- ◆ Do not use the toilet as a wastebasket
- ◆ Replace old showerheads: *Low flow showerheads can save 3 gal/min*
- ◆ Take shorter showers
- ◆ Turn off water when shaving or brushing teeth

In the Laundry

- ◆ Run full loads of laundry instead of many small loads
- ◆ Consider energy and water efficiency when purchasing new laundry machines: *Newer models use 40% less water and can save up to 6000 gal/year*

Tips for Saving Water Outside the Home

Forty percent of total household water supply is used outside the home. Maryland's water resources are daily sprinkled, squirted, dripped, gushed and often wasted outside the home. Follow these tips to reduce water use outdoors:

Landscape Irrigation

- ◆ Install efficient irrigation systems such as drip irrigation, soil soakers, and efficient sprinkler systems
- ◆ Set sprinklers for lawn and garden only, don't water the street or sidewalk
- ◆ Water the lawn only when the ground is dry and preferably no more than once a week: *The amount of water used by a sprinkler in one hour is equal to the daily water needs of a family of four*
- ◆ Water during the coolest part of the day (preferably morning) and never water on windy days: *As much as 30% of water used can be lost to evaporation by watering lawn during midday*
- ◆ Pull weeds to decrease competition for water
- ◆ Increase mowing height to 2-3 inches and apply mulch to both reduce evaporation and prevent weed growth
- ◆ Limit grass areas and use trees, shrubs, and other plants that require less water to landscape your yard: *Grass turf requires 30-50% more water than shrubs and other groundcover*

Other Outdoor Use

- ◆ Repair or replace leaking hoses and sprinklers
- ◆ Always use an automatic shut-off nozzle on hoses
- ◆ Use a broom rather than a hose to clean decks, sidewalks, and other paved areas: *5 minutes of running the hose uses 25 gallons of water*
- ◆ Collect rainwater for reuse in the garden whenever possible
- ◆ Cover pools to prevent evaporation: *An average uncovered pool loses about an inch of water a week because of evaporation.*

For more information, contact the Maryland
Department of the Environment's
Water Supply Program at (410) 537-3702 or visit our
website at: www.mde.state.md.us