United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Office of Water
(4204)

EPA832-F-99-083
April 2000
www.epa.gov/owm/genwave.htm

Using Water Efficiently: Ideas for Communities

Efficient water use can have major environmental, public health, and economic benefits by helping to improve water quality, maintain aquatic ecosystems, and protect drinking water resources. Efficient use of water, through behavioral, operational, or equipment changes, if practiced broadly can help mitigate the effects of drought. This list of measures is not meant to be comprehensive, but rather a starting point. Other sources of information on water efficiency are available through the Guidelines referenced below, EPA's web site (http://www.epa.gov/OWM/genwave.htm), and innumerable other sources, some of which may be accessed through the EPA web site, or through WaterWiser, The Water Efficiency Clearinghouse (http://www.waterwiser.org).

Getting Started:

- Designate a water efficiency coordinator.
- Develop a water efficiency plan. See the *U.S. EPA Water Conservation Guidelines.**
- Educate and involve employees, residents and school children in water efficiency efforts.

System Improvements — Keep a tight system, look at alternative sources:

- Implement a water-loss management program (e.g. repair leaks). The water industry goal for unaccounted-for-water is 10%.
- Utilities should strive for universal metering.
- Consider a reclaimed wastewater distribution system for non-potable uses.
- Ensure that fire hydrants are tamper proof.

Equipment changes — Set a good example by using water efficient equipment.

- Install high-efficiency toilets, or retrofit water-saving devices on existing ones.
- Install faucet aerators and low flow shower heads in municipal buildings.
- As municipal appliances or equipment wear out, replace them with water-saving models.
- Eliminate "once-through" cooling of equipment with municipal water by recycling water flow to cooling tower or replacing with air-cooled equipment.
- Minimize the water used in space cooling equipment in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations. Shut off cooling units when not needed.
- Consider installing new water-saving pool filters.

Policies and Programs to Encourage Efficient Water Use:

- Ensure the utility rate structure encourages water efficiency, or at least does not discourage it.
- Make retrofit kits for residences and businesses available free or at cost. Kits may contain low flow faucet aerators, high efficiency showerheads, leak detection tablets, and replacement valves.
- Promote water-efficient landscape practices for homeowners and businesses, especially those with large, irrigated properties. Practices include use of native plants, landscape renovation to reduce water use, and more efficient irrigation.

- Offer incentive programs (rebates/tax credits) to homeowners and businesses to encourage replacement of plumbing fixtures and appliances with water-efficient models.
- Conduct water-use audits of homes, businesses and industries. Audits provide users with invaluable information about how water is used and how usage might be reduced by specific measures.

Other Measures – For a full list of municipal water efficiency measures see Appendix A of the *U.S. EPA Water Conservation Plan Guidelines.*

*The U.S. EPA Water Conservation Plan Guidelines may be obtained from the Office of Water Resource Center at 202-260-7786. Ask for document number EPA 832-D-98-001.