



# Using Water Efficiently: Ideas for Commercial Businesses

**F**acility managers are finding that water efficiency programs are a cost-effective way to reduce operating costs. Saving water also means saving costs for electric power, gas, chemicals, and wastewater disposal. Efficient water use also 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 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>). EPA's web site also contains information on the Water Alliances for Voluntary Efficiency (WAVE) program. WAVE is a voluntary partnership program sponsored by EPA and designed to promote efficient water use by commercial businesses and institutions.

**General Management Practices** — make a corporate commitment to water efficiency:

- Designate a water efficiency coordinator.
- Develop a mission statement and a plan.
- Educate and involve employees in water efficiency efforts.
- Inform your chemical suppliers or service contractors (cooling tower, laundry, dishwasher, landscaping) that water efficiency is a priority.

**Equipment Changes** — high-efficiency plumbing fixtures, appliances and other equipment yield substantial savings on water, sewer, and energy bills:

- Install high-efficiency toilets, or retrofit water-saving devices on existing toilets.
- Install faucet aerators and showerheads.
- Use water-conserving ice makers.
- As appliances and 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.
- For large laundries: install a rinse-water recycle system; consider continuous-batch (tunnel) washers in new or expanded facilities. For small operations, consider high-efficiency clothes washers.

**Operating and Maintenance Procedures** — a small investment that can yield big savings:

- Find and repair all leaks.
- Minimize the water used in space cooling equipment in accordance with manufacturers recommendations. Shut off cooling units when not needed.

## Kitchen and Laundry Practices — simple changes that save a lot of water:

- Turn off dishwashers when not in use. Wash full loads only.
- Scrape rather than rinse dishes before washing.
- Use water from steam tables to wash down cooking areas.
- Do not use running water to melt ice or frozen foods.
- Handle waste materials in a dry state whenever possible.
- Wash only full loads of laundry.

Landscape Irrigation—can be significant during the growing season in some climates. (During drought conditions outdoor watering restrictions may be imposed, and therefore some of the following tips will not apply.):

- Detect and repair all leaks in irrigation system.
- Use properly treated wastewater for irrigation where available.
- Water the lawn or garden during the coolest part of the day (early morning is best). Do not water on windy days.
- Water trees and shrubs, which have deep root systems, longer and less frequently than shallow-rooted plants that require smaller amounts of water more often. Check with the local extension service for advice on watering needs in your area.
- Set sprinklers to water the lawn or garden only – not the street or sidewalk.
- Use soaker hoses or trickle irrigation for trees and shrubs.
- Install moisture sensors on sprinkler systems.
- Use mulch around shrubs and garden plants to reduce evaporation from the soil surface and cut down on weed growth.
- Remove thatch and aerate turf to encourage movement of water to the root zone.
- Raise your lawn mower cutting height – longer grass blades help shade each other, cut down on evaporation, and inhibit weed growth.
- Minimize or eliminate fertilizing, which promotes new growth needing additional watering.

## Other Outdoor Uses:

- Sweep or blow paved areas to clean, rather than hosing off.
- When using a hose, control the flow with an automatic shut-off nozzle.
- Wash vehicles less often; use a commercial car wash that recycles water.
- Consider a new water-saving swimming pool filter.
- Lower pool water level to reduce amount of water splashed out.
- Use a pool cover to reduce evaporation when pool is not being used.
- Do not install or use ornamental water features unless they recycle the water. Use signs to indicate that water is recycled. Do not operate during a drought.

\* These suggested measures are not intended to supercede more stringent federal, state, tribal, or local health, safety, or environmental regulations.