

UNDERSTANDING RESIDENTIAL WATER USAGE

An introduction to understanding how water is used inside and outside your home, help you identify water use problems, and provide you with useful information on conserving water.

Water conservation is not something that should be considered only during a drought. Conservation should be a way of life.

This pamphlet is not intended to help you fix major plumbing problems, please call a plumber for major repairs.



Information Provided By:

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SINGLE FAMILY WATER USE

Baths	1%
Dishwashing	1%
Leaks	5%
Faucets	8%
Showers	9%
Laundry	12%
Toilets	14%
Outdoor Irrigation	50%

Landscape Irrigation Systems (Automatic Sprinkler Systems)

Landscape irrigation systems are essentially outdoor plumbing systems. Nationally, lawn and landscape irrigation consumes more than half of all water supplied to homes and much of it is wasted.

We have all seen the water wasted from poorly maintained and managed irrigation systems: sprinklers spraying onto the street or sidewalk, broken sprinkler heads spurting into the air, the over-application of water and irrigation in the heat of the day when evaporation is highest. A poorly maintained and managed irrigation system is a big water waster.

To ensure your system is operating efficiently, give it a tune-up:

- Check your irrigation system frequently for broken spray heads and overspray onto pavement; check sprinklers blocked by plants.
- Adjust, clean or replace malfunctioning spray heads. Always replace broken heads with the same type and application rate.
- If grass is blocking existing pop-up heads, replace them with taller 6" pop-up heads of the same manufacturer and type, or install taller riser pipes under the existing heads.
- Set your irrigation controller to apply the correct amount of water for your landscape's needs.
- Sprinklers usually apply water at a faster rate than soil can absorb it. Run your irrigation system for 2 or 3 short cycles instead of one long cycle on the days that you water to ensure that the water soaks into the grounds, rather than running off your yard.
- Reset your irrigation controller to irrigate less in the fall and winter when plants need less water (or turn off the irrigation altogether, depending on the climate).
- Irrigate in the early morning when evaporation is lowest.

Water Consumption for Various Household Activities

WATER SOFTENERS

Self-regenerating water softeners use 40 to 50 gallons of water each time they regenerate. Conversion to portable exchange water softening systems can save thousands of gallons per year. It is a good idea for all automatic water softener tanks to be equipped with on/off switches to prevent wasteful and costly regeneration when the units are not in use, such as during vacation. Check with a reputable plumbing service to find out whether water softeners should be used with your specific type of water.

REVERSE OSMOSIS SYSTEMS

Typical under-the-counter reverse osmosis units create approximately 2 to 4 gallons of reject water for each 1 gallon of treated water. That's a lot of unused water down the drain. A reverse osmosis system can account for 7% to 8% of inside household water consumption. When these units malfunction they draw water continuously to varying degrees. If you are trying to reduce your water use, this is a good place to start!

TOILET

The average person flushes a toilet about 7 to 9 times per day. Most toilets today use 1.6 gallons of water per flush. Older toilets use 3.5 to 5 gallons per flush. If your house has not been retrofitted with low-flush toilets, you could be using 1,200 gallons per billing cycle, instead of about 380 gallons for each person in your household. Newer low-flush toilets work very efficiently.

If you have an older model you may have to hold the handle a moment or two longer to get a full flush. Toilets are the most common source of leaks. For more information, see LOCSD pamphlet entitled *"Identifying and Repairing Toilet Leaks"*.

SHOWER

Older showerheads can use 3 to 8 gallons per minute (gpm), while a low-flow showerhead uses a maximum of 2.5 gpm. A 10-minute shower with an older head can easily use 50 gallons of water, while a low-flow will use 25 gallons at most. In addition, a shut-off on the showerhead allows you to turn down the water flow while soaping or shampooing without losing your water temperature setting. Consistently using that feature will save additional water.

(Low-flow faucet aerators are available to customers within the LOCSD's water service area)

LAVATORY FAUCET

A faucet without a flow restrictor can use up to 5 gallons per minute (gpm). The standard for faucet aerators is now 2.2 gmp. Aerators mix air and water and create a smooth, soft spray instead of a solid stream of water. You will find they work best, and splash the least, when the faucet is not turned on fully. Once you become accustomed to the difference you will realize there is no need for any stronger flow at the bathroom faucet and you will be saving water (and money) without even thinking about it.

KITCHEN FAUCET

Even a mildly dripping faucet can waste gallons of water a day, be sure to repair all leaks. Did you know:

- 60 drops/minute = 192 gallons/month
- 90 drops/minute = 310 gallons/month
- 120 drops/minute = 429 gallons/month
- 3" stream = 1,095 gallons/month
- 6" stream = 2,190 gallons/month
- 9" stream = 3,290 gallons/month

REFRIGERATORS

Regularly check the water supply tubing connection to your refrigerator. Since the water line to the refrigerator is often concealed, any small leak can go undetected until it does expensive water damage to your home.

AUTOMATIC DISWASHERS

Current models consume 5.5 to 11 gallons of water; older models can use as much as 14 gallons of water per load. Check the dishwasher sprayer and drain strainer for food particles or mineral buildup. Running the dishwasher only when full saves water and energy.

WASHING MACHINE

Washing machines are one of the highest water users in the home. Older models of large capacity washing machines use 40 to 50 gallons of water per load. The most efficient models today use 20 to 25 gallons per load. High efficiency washers can save about 5,100 gallons of water per year! A good practice is to run only full loads, saving about 800 gallons of water per month! If a partial load is necessary, be sure to adjust the water level accordingly. Did you know some models have a "cool down" cycle that may use an extra 40 gallons of water—this cycle should be avoided.

OUTDOOR FAUCETS

Outdoor faucets and hoses should be checked for leaks, then repaired or replaced.

POOLS AND SPAS

Use a cover to save water and energy. Keep your filters clean.