

# Using Water More Efficiently in the Bathroom

Some experts estimate that about 75 percent of the water used at home is used in the bathroom. Taking a shower instead of a bath will usually save water, and a low-flow showerhead may well be the single most effective water conservation measure you can take. Cutting back on the amount of water we use is often just a matter of applying common sense. It is time to stop taking our valuable water supplies for granted...and to develop a new mind-set about using it more efficiently.



- ◆ When building a new home or remodeling a bathroom, install a new low-volume flush toilet that uses only 1.6 gallons per flush. Toilets made before the 1980's generally required 5-7 gallons for each flush. By the early 1990's, new toilets were down to 3.5 gallons per flush. To-

day -- and since 1992 in Texas -- new toilets must only use 1.6 gallons or less per flush, so replacing an older toilet promises a significant savings.

- ◆ Test toilets for leaks. Add a few drops of food coloring to the water in the toilet tank, but do not flush the toilet. Watch to see if the coloring appears in the bowl within a few minutes. If it does, the toilet has a silent leak that needs to be repaired.

- ◆ Use some type of toilet tank displacement device to reduce the volume of water in the tank, but still provide enough for flushing. (Bricks are NOT recommended because they eventually crumble and could damage the working mechanisms.) Displacement devices are not recommended with new low-volume flush toilets.

- ◆ Regardless of the type and vintage of toilet, you can minimize the amount of water it uses by making sure the flush and fill components work properly, and by not using it as a "trash can" (to avoid unnecessary flushes).

- ◆ Check water line connections and faucets for leaks. A slow drip can waste as much as 170 gallons of water EACH DAY, or 5,000 gallons a month. This will increase your water bill.



- ◆ Repair leaky faucets promptly. It is easy to do, it costs very little and can make a substantial savings in your water bills.

- ◆ Carefully consider the ways you use water in the bathroom. Stop running the water while you brush your teeth, for example, just to rinse the toothbrush. The same method can be used for shaving and for washing hands.

- ◆ Consider installing a low-flow faucet aerator. This could actually help you save up to half the water you normally use at the sink.

- ◆ Insulate all hot water pipes to reduce the delays (and wasted water) experienced while waiting for the water to heat up.

- ◆ Set the thermostat on the hot water heater at a reasonable level. Extremely hot settings waste water (because it takes some extra cold water to make it usable) and energy and can even cause minor burns.



- ◆ Install a low-flow showerhead to limit the amount of water to less than three gallons per minute. Take shorter showers -- they use less water than baths do -- and shampoo your hair at the same time to save even more water. ■