

Water

It's too expensive and valuable to waste

Some parts of the United States have had real droughts this winter. The farmlands and ski slopes of the West, particularly, went for months without significant rainfall or snow. Some state governments began rationing procedures. The Better Business Bureau (BBB) reminds all Americans that in the midst of our energy crisis, even water is not a fully dependable resource.

Next to heating and cooling our homes, using hot water takes the biggest chunk out of energy budgets. And two-thirds of all the water used in the average American home is used in the bathroom.

This doesn't mean that one has to take cold showers to save energy. In fact, even showers use five to 10 gallons of water a minute. Many people linger longer in the shower than in a tub, so that their good intentions are meaningless. The best answer is a partially-filled tub.

Leaks account for much of the water waste in the home. Check for toilet leaks by putting food coloring in the tank, and watch for signs of it in the bowl. If there is a leak, repair it immedi-

ately. There is some uncertainty about just how much water is wasted by a leaky faucet. Estimates run from one drop a second wasting 700 gallons a year to a slow drip which wastes as much as 15 gallons a day. A 1/8 inch stream can waste 400 gallons in 24 hours. Checking the monthly (or quarterly) usage statement from the local utility company can show how much money is literally going down the drain.

The next step in controlling the amount of water wasted in your home is to set the hot water thermostat on normal, or about 140 degrees. It also is a good idea to insulate the hot water tank and pipes. Insulating a tank can be dangerous and is better done by a professional. However, it is easy to wrap pipes in fiberglass if they are inside, or to build a box around those which are outside the house.

It is not necessary to wash only in hot water. Try warm or cold washes at least occasionally, and always rinse in cold water. It is most economical to wash a single full load of clothes than several small ones.

Washing machines which have various water level settings for partial loads are energy savers.

Another way to save water is to use the dishwasher only when it is full. An average load uses about 14 gallons of hot water. If you want to rinse dishes before loading, do so in cold water. Use a pan, not running water. Save even more energy by letting the dishes air dry. Turn the washer off after its final rinse, and open the door.

With warmer weather, many of us will be anxious to get outside. When watering the lawn this summer, be especially energy conscious, says the BBB. The average 1/2 inch garden hose pours out more than 600 gallons of water each hour. So, use a broom and not a hose to sweep away those leaves.

Although it may be fun for some high-spirited people, one of the most common water wasters is the free-running hose to wash a car. Instead, use a bucket or two, says the BBB. Our water supply may sometimes seem inexhaustible, but we once thought that about our other natural resources.

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