Susquehanna River Basin Commission tips

Water Conservation

How You Can Help...

Residential Water Users

Landscaping

- Select more drought-tolerant plant species for landscaping. Use mulch to retain moisture and prevent weed growth. Weeds compete for water.
- Do not water lawns, unless just newly seeded. Grass often goes dormant and brown — not dead — under drought conditions.
- Limit grass areas and use trees, shrubs, and other plants that require less water. Grass turf requires 30-50% more water than shrubs and other groundcover.
- When mowing, leave grass 2-3 inches high to reduce evaporation and prevent weed growth.
- Install efficient irrigation systems such as drip irrigation, soil soakers and efficient sprinkler systems.
- Set sprinklers for lawn and garden only to avoid watering streets and sidewalks.
- Water during the coolest part of the day (preferably morning) and never water on windy days. As much as 30% of water used can be lost to evaporation by watering lawns during midday.
- Repair or replace leaky hoses and sprinklers.

Pools

- Cover pools to prevent evaporation. An average uncovered pool loses about an inch of water a week because of evaporation.

Rain barrels are attached to downspouts which collect storm water running off your roof. An overflow system allows excess water to be directed elsewhere. The rainwater collected in the barrel can be used for watering your plants or garden during dry times of the year.

Vehicle Washing

- Limit car washing, especially during times of drought.
- Use car wash facilities over washing your car at home. Most car washes use substantially less water (<45 gallons) than home washes (80-140 gallons). Facilities that recycle water are even a better choice.

Cleaning

- Use a broom rather than a hose to clean off decks, sidewalks and other paved areas. Five minutes of running the hose uses 25 gallons of water.

Indoors

- Take short showers instead of baths.
- Install low-flow toilets or toilet dams.
- Test all toilets regularly for leaks. A leaking toilet could waste up to 100 gallons of water each day.
- Install flow restrictors on showerheads. Low-flow showerheads can save 3 gallons of water a minute.
- Do not let the water run continuously when shaving or brushing teeth.
- Run washing machines and dishwashers only when filled to capacity.
- Consider water efficiency when buying a new dishwasher or washing machine. New water- and energy-efficient dishwasher models use 20% less water, and newer washing machines use 40% less water.
- Repair leaking and dripping faucets immediately. A leaking faucet could waste up to 4,000 gallons of water per year.
- Defrost food in refrigerator instead of using running water. A running faucet uses about a gallon of water per minute.
- Use a dishpan or plug the sink when hand-washing dishes.
- Don't pre-rinse dishes before loading into dishwasher.
- Keep a container of water in the refrigerator rather than waiting for cold water from faucet.

40th Anniversary SRBC 1971 - 2011

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Industrial and Commercial Water Users

Educate & Involve Employees

- Educate employees about water scarcity issues and the benefits of water conservation practices. Informed employees can better identify problems and think innovatively about ways to conserve or reuse water within the facility.
- Set up a water conservation program that seeks ideas from employees and rewards employee contributions.

Plumbing

- Inspect plumbing fixtures for leaks and repair faulty piping. The easiest way to identify when leaks occur is to know when your water use rises above a base level for your operations.
- Install water-conserving devices and update outdated plumbing fixtures.
- Install ultra low-flow toilets, adjust flush valves or install dams on existing toilets.
- Install faucet aerators and high efficiency showerheads.
- Use water-conserving ice makers.
- Replace worn-out appliances and equipment with water-saving models.

Water Re-Use & Recycling

- Implement a water reuse program. Reusing water for other on-site applications include industrial uses, landscape irrigation, agricultural irrigation, heating or cooling, aesthetic uses (such as fountains) or fire protection.
- Reuse water for the same application. The water may require treatment before reuse, but many processes can be modified to closed loop recycling programs.

Cooling and Heating

- Recycling water with a recirculating cooling system can greatly reduce water use; many industries use water to cool heat-generating equipment or to condense gases.
- Maximize the efficiency of your cooling tower. Consider eliminating once-through cooling of equipment with municipal water by recycling the water flow to cooling towers or replacing it with air-cooled equipment. High volumes of water can be lost as water vapor while performing the cooling function.

Cleaning

Indoors

- Use dry cleaning methods, such as brooms, squeegees and dry vacuum cleaners to clean surfaces; wash with water only when necessary to meet health regulations. Clean oil and grease with clay absorbents.
- Install shut-off valves on washing equipment that has aerated spray nozzles.
- Install shut-off valves on hoses with high-pressure, low-volume nozzles.
- Mop floors instead of hosing, where possible.

Outdoors

- Sweep parking areas, loading docks, driveways and sidewalks rather than hosing, unless it's required for health regulations.
- Reconsider the need to wash building exteriors or other outside structures.
- Reduce the frequency of cleaning external equipment and floors where possible.
- Change window cleaning schedules from 'regular' to 'as required' and use squeegees.
- Wash vehicles only when needed.
- Limit the use of high-pressure sprayers, unless they are needed to protect human health and maintain safety.
- Design landscapes that require less water.
- Don't water lawns or landscaped areas unless newly planted.
- Turn off fountains.

Golf Courses

- Narrow fairways and incorporate native warm season grasses and perennials in roughs to decrease irrigation needs.
- Select drought-resistant turf grasses that tolerate less water and require less pesticide.
- Use water from on-site detention basins or treated effluent from local sewage treatment plants for irrigation before drawing water from wells or surface water.

Agricultural Water Users

- Use conservation tillage, which leaves crop residue on your field after harvest, to increase soil moisture and reduce evaporation.
- Cover crops used in no-till production of corn or soybeans provide an excellent surface mulch after being killed with a contact herbicide; the mulch not only reduces soil erosion, but also slows evaporation of soil moisture, increases infiltration of rainfall, increases soil organic matter and aids in control of annual weeds.
- Closely monitor soil moisture. (Ask your local Natural Resource Conservation Service office for a complimentary copy of the agency publication "Estimating Soil Moisture by Feel and Appearance.")
- Know your animals' forage needs. Contract early to make sure you will have enough hay during dry times or find alternative feed sources.