

## WATER CONSERVATION CHECKLIST :



# OFFICE BUILDINGS

*EVERY DROP COUNTS!*

### GETTING STARTED

To reduce water consumption whether in an office or commercial/industrial setting, consider the three-step process below. Foremost, employees must understand how their job affects water use in their work environment. Solicit ideas from those most involved with the daily operations and activities of the organization. Make conserving water part of their job by having them identify where water is used, whether in bathrooms or manufacturing operations. Once the areas of water consumption have been determined, engage the employees to help implement conservation measures.

- Educate and involve employees on water conservation,
- Locate all water using sources (bathrooms, wash sinks, hoses, dish machines, HVAC, cooling water, etc.) in facility; and
- Identify and implement water conservation options.

### IMMEDIATE CONSERVATION OPTIONS

#### What Employees Can Do:

- Don't let water run while washing hands.
- Don't use toilets as a garbage disposal.
- Don't pour water down the drain when there may be another use for it, such as watering a plant or for cleaning purposes.
- Do report leaks and water losses immediately.
- Remember to conserve water at home.

#### What Building/Facility Managers Can Do:

- Designate a water efficiency coordinator.
- Use posters and signs in bathrooms as water conservation reminders with contact

information on reporting leaks.

- Detect and repair all leaks. In tank toilets, conduct dye leak tests.
- For tank-type toilets with 3.5-gallon or greater flush, install toilet dams or low-flow flapper valves to decrease consumption per flush.
- Retrofit flushometer (tankless) toilets with water-saving diaphragms (saves 20 percent per flush).
- Check timing cycles and volumes for automatic water-flushing systems in urinals and toilets. Coordinate automatic systems with work hours so they don't run continuously.
- Shut off cooling units when not needed
- Minimize the water used in cooling equipment in accordance with manufacturers recommendations
- Optimize blowdown/bleed-off control on boilers and cooling towers.
- Install faucet aerators and high efficiency shower heads.
- Sweep or blow paved areas to clean, rather than hosing off.
- Don't wash building exteriors or other outside structures.
- Discontinue irrigation of lawns and ornamental plants.
- Don't wash cars or other vehicles unless necessary for operator safety.
- Discontinue operation of all inside and outside decorative pools and fountains.
- Use a shut-off nozzle on all hoses which can be adjusted down to a fine spray so that water flows only as needed. When finished, turn it off at the faucet instead of at the nozzle to avoid leaks.



NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
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## What Cafeteria Workers Can Do:

- Turn off dishwashers when not in use. Wash full loads only.
- Scrape rather than rinse dishes before washing.
- Do not use running water to melt ice/frozen foods.
- Discontinue use of garbage disposals. Start a compost pile as an alternate method of disposing of food waste.
- Operate steam tables to minimize excess water.
- Discontinue use of water softening systems if possible.
- Use water-conserving icemakers.
- Install electric eye sensors for conveyer dishwashers.

Refer to the Food Service Operations checklist for more information.

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## LONG TERM ACTIONS

### Inside

- Consider replacing toilets with 1.6-gallon ultra-low flow models.
- As appliances and equipment wear out, replace them with water-saving models.
- Eliminate "once-through" cooling of equipment by recycling water flow to cooling tower or replacing with air-cooled equipment.
- Consider purchasing high efficiency equipment such as new water and energy efficient dishwashers.
- Ensure water pipes are properly insulated avoid wasting water waiting for it to heat up.

### Outside

- Detect and repair all leaks in irrigation systems.
- Water the lawn during the coolest part of the day (early morning is best).
- Water trees and shrubs, which have deep root systems, longer and less frequently than shallow-rooted plants which require smaller amounts of

water more often. Check with the local extension service for advice on the amount and frequency of watering needed in your area.

- Don't overwater. As a general rule, lawns only need watering every five to seven days in the summer and every 10 to 14 days in the winter. A hearty rain eliminates the need for watering for up to two weeks. Buy a rain gauge and use it to determine how much rain the lawn has received. Most of the year, lawns only need one inch of water per week.
- Set sprinklers to water the lawn or garden only - not the street or sidewalk.
- Check sprinkler systems and timing devices regularly to be sure they operate properly.
- Use soaker hoses and trickle irrigation systems.
- Do not leave sprinklers or hoses unattended. A garden hose can pour out 600 gallons or more in only a few hours.
- Have the soil tested for nutrient content and add organic matter if needed. Good soil absorbs and retains water better.
- Plant native and/or drought-tolerant grasses, ground covers, shrubs and trees. Once established, they do not need water as frequently.
- 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 the lawn mower cutting height - longer grass blades help shade each other, cut down on evaporation, and inhibit weed growth.
- Minimize or eliminate fertilizing which requires additional watering.
- Avoid the installation of ornamental water features (such as fountains) unless the water is recycled.

Refer to the Landscaping/Irrigation Checklist for more information.



The North Carolina Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance provides free, non-regulatory technical assistance and education on methods to eliminate, reduce, or recycle wastes before they become pollutants or require disposal. Call DPPEA at (919) 715-6500 or (800) 763-0136 or e-mail [nowaste@p2pays.org](mailto:nowaste@p2pays.org), or visit DPPEA's Web site at <http://www.p2pays.org> for assistance with issues in this checklist or any of your waste reduction concerns.