

# This is a hotel guide to being

## WATER WISE!

Drought conditions in North Carolina in 2007 and 2008 were one of the biggest environmental problems the state had faced in some time. Water conservation is being seen as a proactive approach to helping preserve water supplies for the state's future. The N.C. Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance's role is to help industries, small businesses and citizens take measures to help conserve water. The following information is focused on helping hotels lower water usage.

It has been estimated that the average hotel room uses 209 gallons of water for a one-night stay. This number has the ability to be greatly reduced with the help of hotel guests and staff. Some simple solutions to money savings and water conservation efforts will be given to help lower water consumption rates in your hotel.

### Did You Know?

A 250-room hotel at 80% occupancy can save approximately \$66,795.00 and 220,000 gallons of water annually from the reduced cost of a towel/linen reuse program.

### Why should hotels participate?

- To reduce spending costs on water and laundry detergent for the hotel.
- Your responsibility to the guests. Customers are becoming increasingly aware of environmental problems facing the world. They are starting to expect the companies they choose to do their part in efforts use resources efficiently.
- To save water for the future. With growing populations and drought conditions as they are, water needs to be saved to ensure it is available in the future.

## USEFUL IDEAS AND PROGRAMS FOR WATER REDUCTION:

### Easy water saving solutions:

- Put a full **water bottle in every toilet tank** to save water used when flushing the toilet. The amount of water it displaces is not enough to disrupt the toilets ability to function properly, but when put in every room it can make a big difference in water usage.
- Assign a **Water Conservation Manager**. This allows one person to be in charge and aware of all the conservation efforts being made throughout the hotel. The manager makes the effort more organized and allows the employees and guests a staff member to go to for water management related questions.
- **Educate the staff**. It is important that the hotel staff is aware that new efforts are being put in place for water conservation. The more aware everyone is, the more likely they are to think twice before using water.
- **Inspect rooms for leaks**. This can be done weekly, monthly or quarterly; whatever your staff has time for. Toilets, shower heads, ice makers and faucets often develop leaks after constant use, so inspections will not only save water, but it also will be a benefit to the guests to ensure they do not run into problems with the appliances.
- **Install low-flow toilets, toilet flappers, showerheads and faucets**. High-quality low-flow products are now being made. Low-flow showerheads can be found that do not sacrifice water pressure or shower quality.
- Have an in-house **rainwater collection** system for irrigation, to feed fountains, or to be used for mopping.
- Look in to a **Xeriscaping** as the hotel's form of landscaping. Information on this can be found at <http://www.savewaternc.org>.
- Implement a **towel/linen reuse program**. This has proven to be one of the most efficient ways to reduce water usage and has been adopted by lots of hotels. Go to <http://www.p2pays.org/hospitality/main/facts.htm> for some downloadable, printable linen reuse cards.

## In Depth on the Hotel Linen/Towel reuse program:

A linen and towel reuse program gives guests staying more than one night the option to have linens and towels washed every three days instead of every day. This will reduce the amount of money spent on water and detergent for the hotel. If your hotel chooses to adopt this program you can either make it the policy to wash the linens every three days unless the guest specifies otherwise (guest wants linens washed every day). There are many simple ways to have the guest communicate with the housekeeping staff to let them know if they want to participate in the program. Door hangers, place cards and alerting the front desk are just a few ideas of keeping the communication open.

Linen/Towel reuse program kits can be found through many different companies. A few are listed below to help you in your search, but please note that these listings do not constitute an endorsement by the state of North Carolina.

<http://www.projectplanetcorp.com/>

- <http://www.greenhotels.com/>

The towel and linen reuse program is practiced in many hotels and hotel chains. It has proven to be one of the largest cost and labor savings of all the suggested water reduction programs.

# HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE WATER REDUCTION PROGRAM

## Before starting a Water Conservation Program:

- ***Get staff involved!*** Ask employees from different departments where they see water being wasted and if they have any ideas for a water conservation program.
- ***Make a goal,*** define exactly what the hotel hopes to achieve from these water conservation efforts.
- ***Develop a plan*** that will allow the goal to be obtained. Outline where the changes will be made and how.
- ***Define a manager*** of water conservation efforts. This gives the staff a “go to” person if they have questions about the new water reduction policies.

## Responsibility:

Be sure there is a clearly defined plan and goals that work for your hotel. Ideally find one employee in each department to be the “go to” person for questions on the department’s role in this program.

## How to Train the Staff:

To get the most out of these water conservation efforts all hotel employees and management need to be aware of the changes being made and given proper resources to ensure the program can be implemented as planned.

Be enthusiastic when explaining new water reduction policies. More than likely, most of your staff is already trying to cut water consumption and will be eager to assist in the hotel's new efforts to reduce water consumption.

## After the program has started:

- Keep the staff up-to-date on how the program is working to ensure they want to continue actively participating.
- Ask for feedback from the staff on how the water conservation system could be improved or what they think is working well.
- If possible, provide incentives for employees who provide good ideas or those who are the most enthusiastic about the program. Remember the amount of water savings is probably going to greatly surpass these small costs.