

# Home Water Management



## Why Should You Conserve Water?

*You pay for what you use, so why not use less and save? Help clean up the environment too!*

You can save hundreds of dollars a year by being more efficient with the water you use. Using less water also means less chemicals to process dirty water, less sewage, and less electricity used to deliver the water to your home.

Conserving water helps ensure that Parker Water & Sanitation District has a reliable and cost effective water supply for the future.

This brochure is aimed at helping you, our customer, save water and money without making big changes or sacrifices. Use these tips and tricks to learn more about your family's water use and how to better conserve water.

With this information, we hope you find it easy to conserve. For more information about saving water in your home, please visit [www.pwsd.org](http://www.pwsd.org) or contact us at 303.841.4627.

## Contact Us



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## What Can YOU Do?

### Saving Water Indoors

- Change your shower head to a low flow model, and use a shower timer to monitor your time in the shower.
- Don't flush tissues or other trash down the toilet.
- Turn off the water when brushing your teeth and save 2.5 to 4 gallons a minute. That's up to 200 gallons a week for a family of four!
- Rinse razors with short blasts of water or by swishing it in a partially filled sink – don't just let the water run.
- Save the shower water used while waiting for the water to get hot in a bucket for house plants, or to flush toilets.
- Rinse vegetables in a sink filled with water instead of running water.
- Use the garbage disposal sparingly and the garbage can more. You can save 50 to 150 gallons per month.

### Saving Water Outdoors

- Water the lawn only when it needs it. If the grass springs back when you step on it, there is no need to water it. Hand water isolated dry spots instead of turning on the sprinkler system.
- Use wood mulch to help retain water in your garden and around trees (be sure the mulch is pulled back several inches from tree trunks).
- Look at your yard in a new way – if you don't walk on it, you DON'T need it in bluegrass! Replace water hungry bluegrass with xeric alternatives, such as Blue Grama or Buffalo Grass.
- Set your mower on the highest setting, as tall grass means less evaporation.
- Washing a car for 20 minutes can use over 100 gallons of water. Use a bucket of water to wash the car, and give it a quick rinse. Or better yet, go to a car wash that recycles the water.

## Outdoor Check

Sprinkler systems can be very inefficient unless you watch them closely. If not properly designed or maintained, they waste water.

Waste also occurs if timers are not adjusted during the season for weather conditions. Other factors that effect sprinkler efficiency include breaks, leaks or just plain over watering.

It is recommended that you check for leaks regularly. If you are not certain about doing your own repairs, contact an irrigation specialist or qualified landscape contractor.

### Sprinkler System Checklist

- Turn on lawn sprinklers and observe the spray patterns from the nozzles. Note any leaks, tilted, broken or clogged heads, and adjust/repair as needed. Make sure sprinkler heads are spraying into your landscaped areas, and not onto the streets or sidewalks.
- Turn on drip and bubbler valves and observe water flow and wetting patterns. Make adjustments and repairs as necessary for best coverage of plant material.
- Check and maintain your sprinkler system regularly. A heavy rain means you don't have to water at all. Teach family members how to turn off an automatic sprinkler system during a storm.
- Use your water meter to monitor how much irrigation water you use. See the meter check portion of this guide for instructions.

## Scheduling Your Controller

Know how to adjust your controller. Change watering schedules with the seasons, rain or changes in the landscape. The more often you change your schedule, the more water you can save. Don't just "set it and forget it"!

Using the Districts Guide to Outdoor Watering and a rain gauge, perform a catch can test and follow the instructions printed in the guide. Then use a rain gauge to check the amount of rainfall and adjust your watering time appropriately.

## More Water Saving Tips

**Toilet leaks are often silent.** Once a year, check for leaks. Remove the toilet tank cover and place dye tablets or drip food coloring into the tank. After 30 minutes, check for color in the toilet bowl (flush as soon as test is done, since food coloring may stain the tank). If you see any color in the bowl, your toilet has a leak and should be repaired immediately. Also remember to check your flapper periodically to make sure it fits tightly.

**Maintain the water level in the toilet tank** at least 1 ½ inches below the top of the overflow tube. If needed, bend the float arm to adjust the toilet water level.

**Consider replacing your old toilet, the largest water user inside your home.** If your house was built before 1992, and the toilet has never been replaced, then it is very likely that you do not have a water efficient 1.6 gallon per flush toilet. If you are unsure of the vintage of your toilet you can usually check the date of manufacture by looking at the underside of the tank lid. If your toilet was made after 1993 it should be an efficient model.

**Check every faucet for leaks.** Even a slow drip can waste more than 20 gallons every day. Fix it and you'll save more than 7,000 gallons per year.

**Install low-flow faucet aerators.** Aerators can cut water usage by more than 50 percent.

**Watch your time in the shower.** A typical shower lasts about eight minutes and uses 20 or more gallons of water. An efficient shower lasts four to five minutes and uses 10 gallons. Use the Shower Flow Gauge bag, available in our free Home Water Audit Kit, to see how much water your shower head uses.

**Know where your master water shut-off valve is.** This could save hundreds of gallons of water and prevent damage to your home if a pipe were to burst.

**Only run the laundry when there is a full load.** Washing machines are more water and energy efficient when full. One load of laundry uses 38 to 45 gallons of water. Front loading washers use between 10 to 25 gallons. Consider purchasing a front loading washer if you are in the market for a replacement.

**Dishwashers** use between 12 to 20 gallons per load, so be sure you are only running full loads.

**Need a cold drink of water?** Try storing a jug in the refrigerator rather than running water until it cools down.

**When washing dishes by hand,** don't let the water run. Fill one sink with wash water and another with rinse water.

**Use a broom instead of a hose** to clean off driveways and sidewalks. It can save over 80 gallons of water, and is great exercise as well!

**Do one thing each day that will save water.** Even if savings are small, every drop counts!

No one knows your water usage like you and your family. Take stock of your water use habits around the home. Stop by the District office for your free Home Water Audit Kit, and help save water, energy, money and the environment!

## Meter Check

**Leaks happen,** even to the most water wise family. The best way to determine water use is to read your water meter. Using the meter, you can calculate daily usage, see if there is a leak, or determine how much water is used by different appliances. High water use may be caused by leaks, broken pipes, plumbing fixtures, consumption habits, inefficient irrigation scheduling, appliance problems or valve failure.

### How to check for leaks with your water meter:

- Turn off all taps and appliances that use water (humidifiers, ice makers, dishwashers, washing machines, etc.) in your home.
- Record the meter's reading before and after one hour's time.
- If the meter reading has increased, you have a leak, or water is running somewhere in the home.
- Visually check all water sources in your home (toilets, taps, humidifiers and water softeners) for leaks.

To find out how much water a certain activity, appliance or fixture uses, turn off all other taps, and then read the meter before the activity and just after the activity is complete.

## Leak Check

Leaks should be fixed immediately since they can quickly develop into a serious break. If you find a fixture that is leaking, turn off the shutoff valve for that device. Then locate the leak. Try to tighten any fittings that leak. A quarter or half turn with a wrench might do the trick. Be careful not to over-tighten fittings.

**Toilets:** Leaking toilets cause more water waste than any other fixture in the home. Even a silent toilet leak (that's one you normally can't hear) will waste from 30 to 500 gallons of water per day! The ones you can hear will waste much more. Such wastage can normally be attributed to a faulty water level adjustment or to a leaky flapper.

**Faucets and Bathtubs:** Most faucet and bathtub leaks are plainly visible as drips coming out of the spout. Occasionally faucets may leak in other places such as the hot or cold water handles or in the pipes below the basin.

**Irrigation system:** Most leaks occur because a valve fails to shut completely, but leaks in system pipes are not unheard of. Broken heads, while not technically a "leak", waste water when the system is operating.

**Water heater:** Leaks are usually quite obvious and you will discover substantial amounts of water on the floor around your heater. Normally, the first sign of a heater problem is water dripping from the bottom of the jacket. This indicates that the tank has corroded through.

**What to do when you find a leak.** Hiring a plumber is the best solution, particularly if you are not comfortable making repairs. You can also get repair tips at a hardware store or read how-to books or magazines with detailed instructions.