

## Helping Consumers Understand Water Conservation

Water conservation is essential in all regions, even where water seems abundant. While traveling this beautiful state of Arkansas, one of the many things I hear from consumers is the rising cost of water. Water, for the most part, is usually the cheapest utility bill a consumer has, yet it is the most argumentative one to deal with as a utility.

Before I started working in the water industry, I was guilty of complaining every month about my water bill. I said and asked the same things I hear consumers complain about when I visit utilities:

“There is no way I used 10,000 gallons in one month. It’s just me and my dog living in the house.”

“How is it possible that one person can use that much water in one month?”

“I don’t have a leak. You need to check the meter. It’s wrong.”

“Drive by reading? They must be driving too fast by my house.”

These are just a few, but I could go on and on all day with the many reasons water bills are extremely high through the consumer’s eyes. The majority actually believe water should be free. It wasn’t until I started working in the water industry that I realized how much work goes on behind the scene to make water potable. I have learned rather than arguing with the consumer about the cost of water, it’s better to educate the consumer of why their water bill seems high.

There are many inexpensive ways for consumers to lower their bills and help conserve water. Whether we like it or not, it’s up to you, as the utility, to educate your customers. I’ve listed examples below:

1. Always start with basic math. For example, the amount of gallons wasted daily through a leaky toilet, faucet, outside spigot, etc. (ex. 1 gallon per minute x 1440 minutes per day)
2. Fix leaky faucets, toilets and plumbing joints. (saves 20 gals/day/leak)
3. Install water saving shower heads and restrictors. (saves 500-800 gals/month)
4. Run full loads in the washing machine and dishwasher. (saves 300-800 gals/month)
5. Shorten shower time. (a one-two minute reduction can save up to 700 gals/month)
6. Water your lawn only when needed and between 3am-5am. (saves 750-1,500 gals/month)
7. Turn the hose off when washing vehicles. (saves 150 gals/wash)

In addition, utilities should also pay attention to leaks within the system. As the weather is changing to warmer temperatures, water mains will start shifting and that means water leaks. The terrain in Arkansas isn’t the same, and that means all leaks aren’t easy to find. Usually the leaks that are hard to find are found when your daily pumping increases significantly. Increased pumping also means increased electrical usage.

Safe drinking water is essential to all humans and other life even though it provides no calories or organic nutrients. We all need it to survive and it's up to us, the human population, to make sure we conserve it.

