



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Water Department

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Saving Water Saves Energy

By Luis Generoso, Water Resources Manager

SAN DIEGO –March not only marks the start of the spring season, but it also kicks off the California Energy Commission’s “Flex Your Power Month.” The City of San Diego Water Department, together with other local water agencies, is partnering with the Energy Commission to highlight ways San Diegans can save water while at the same time conserving energy.

Water and energy have an important relationship. The California Energy Commission reports that, "moving water around the state takes up to 40 percent of the total energy supply." So there are several ways in which our water use behavior affects our household energy consumption.

According to Gary Klein of the California Energy Commission, “Water and energy are wasted while residents wait for hot water to get from the water heater to the fixtures dispersed throughout the home.” He calculates that 10-20 gallons of water are wasted each day while waiting for the hot water to arrive.” How can one eliminate, reduce, or effectively use the water wasted during this process?

- ◆ Maximize wasted water usage by using the cold water for something else. Capture the unused water in a bucket to water plants or rinse off vegetables.
- ◆ An easy way to save water and energy is to turn off the tap. The “Flex Your Power Campaign” notes that turning off the tap while shaving can save up to 12 gallons of water, and turning off the tap while brushing your teeth can save up to 5 gallons of water.

Other ways to save water and energy is to invest or use energy-efficient household appliances, which in turn may also lower your utility bills in the long run.

- ◆ Run full loads in a high-efficiency clothes washer. A high-efficiency washing (HEW) machine uses 40 percent less water than the average washer, uses 55 percent less energy, and reduces drying time by 50 percent. A single machine can save approximately 5,100

gallons of water per year. Not only do they use less water, HEW machines use less energy because there is less water to heat.

- ◆ Run full loads in the dishwasher. Traditional dishwashing machines account for nearly 28 percent of all indoor water usage. Additionally, data from the California Energy Commission shows that dishwashers use 37 percent less water than washing dishes by hand. While there may be some concerns that a significant amount of energy is needed to heat the water in the dishwasher, there are new and innovative products on the market. Products with the Energy Star® sticker maximize water and energy consumption for homeowners.
- ◆ Use appliances after peak hours. The “Flex Your Power” Campaign suggests using large appliances like dishwashers and clothes washing machines after 7 p.m. to help save both water and energy.

Appropriate landscape design is another way to conserve energy. For instance, planting deciduous trees that shade the south side of your house will cut down on energy use by at least 10 percent. This will cool your roof during the summer months and allow you to use less air conditioning. Also, in the winter when these trees are bare, they will allow sunlight into your house warming it up and cutting down your heating costs.

It’s amazing how much water and energy are inter-related,” explained Chris Robbins, Supervising Management Analyst for the City of San Diego Water Department. “In the last year, the water conserving efforts created by our programs helped to save more than 3 million kilowatt-hours of energy, and prevented the production of nearly 1,800 tons of carbon dioxide.”

Flex your power and use water wisely not only during the month of March, but also throughout the whole year. For more tips on how to save energy and water in your home, visit the “Flex Your Power” website at <http://www.flexyourpower.ca.gov/> and the City’s Water Department’s website at www.sandiego.gov/water/conservation.

The Water Conservation Program reduces water demand through promoting or providing incentives for the installation of hardware that provides permanent water savings, and by providing services and information to help San Diegans make better decisions about water use. For more information about Water Conservation, visit www.sandiego.gov/water or call 619.515.3500.