



Questions and Answers About the

WaterSense[®] Program

WaterSense, a partnership program sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), seeks to protect the future of our nation's water supply by offering people a simple way to use less water with water-efficient products, new homes, and services.

WHY DOES THE UNITED STATES NEED A WATER EFFICIENCY PROGRAM?

Water is a finite resource. Between 70 and 75 percent of the earth's surface is covered with water, but only 1 percent of that is available for human use. While both world population and the demand for freshwater resources are increasing, supply remains constant. Our changing climate also means the quantity and quality of water is affected. Water efficiency helps preserve our water supply for future generations.

IS WATER SUPPLY AN ISSUE EVERYWHERE IN THE UNITED STATES?

There are many areas in the United States that already face water shortages, and the number of areas facing this issue has been growing. The U.S. Government Accountability Office reports that 40 out of 50 state water managers expect water shortages under average conditions in some portion of their state over the next decade.

HOW CAN WATER EFFICIENCY HELP LOCAL COMMUNITIES?

Water supply infrastructure is a major cost for most communities across the United States. EPA reports estimate that drinking water and wastewater utilities will need to invest hundreds of billions of dollars over the next 20 years to update their infrastructure. Water efficiency can prove to be a cost-effective way for local communities to manage their infrastructure needs. The least expensive gallon of drinking water to supply or wastewater to treat is the one that is not used.

WHICH REGIONS HAVE THE LARGEST WATER SUPPLY CHALLENGES?

Water use varies greatly depending upon geographic location and season, largely as a result of differences in climate. For instance, water use tends to be higher in the West and Southwest than in the East or Midwest. However, water and wastewater infrastructure systems across the country are being challenged by population growth and aging components. Water efficiency can lessen the stress on these systems and extend their useful life. Further complicating the issue of water supply and availability is the fact that population growth is greatest in states that have more limited water resources.

WHY DID EPA CREATE WATERSENSE?

EPA realized that managing water supplies was becoming an increasingly important issue to communities around the country. Through this national partnership program, local governments, water utilities, product manufacturers, retailers, distributors, builders, and professional certifying organizations work with EPA to promote water-efficient products, new homes, and programs among consumer and commercial audiences.

WHAT IS THE GOAL OF WATERSENSE?

EPA created WaterSense to provide consumers with a simple way to identify water-efficient products, new homes, and programs that save water *and* perform well. The WaterSense label helps customers differentiate between products in the marketplace,

while ensuring product performance and encouraging innovation in manufacturing and building.

HOW DOES EPA ENSURE THAT WATERSENSE LABELED PRODUCTS PERFORM WELL?

Performance criteria are a critical component to each WaterSense product specification developed. To earn the WaterSense label, products must undergo testing and independent certification by third-party certification bodies to ensure they meet EPA's criteria.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE LABELING PROGRAM?

Tank-type toilets, lavatory faucets, faucet accessories, showerheads, flushing urinals, irrigation controllers, and pre-rinse spray valves that use less water and perform as well or better than standard models are eligible to earn the WaterSense label. New single- and multi-family homes that save water inside and out can also earn the WaterSense label, as can professional certification programs that advance water-efficient irrigation techniques and practices.

HOW CAN CONSUMERS IDENTIFY WATERSENSE LABELED PRODUCTS?

The WaterSense label differentiates product models that meet EPA's criteria for water efficiency and performance. The label artwork appears on product packaging, on in-store displays, in literature, and on websites. Consumers can also visit www.epa.gov/watersense to see a registry of WaterSense labeled products.



HOW ARE SPECIFICATIONS FOR PRODUCTS DETERMINED?

For each product under consideration, EPA conducts extensive research to analyze potential specifications. Draft water efficiency and performance criteria are developed for the specification as an open process, and EPA solicits input from stakeholders to ensure that the most appropriate criteria are selected for each product category before finalizing the specification.

HOW DOES SAVING WATER SAVE ENERGY?

It takes a lot of energy to pump, treat, and supply water to your home. Using water efficiently not only saves energy, but reduces the greenhouse gas emissions associated with electricity generation. If every home in the United States was equipped with WaterSense

labeled fixtures and ENERGY STAR® qualified appliances, we could save enough electricity to power 1 million American homes for a year.

WHAT IS A WATERSENSE LABELED NEW HOME?

Single-family homes and multi-family units that earn the WaterSense label feature WaterSense labeled plumbing fixtures, efficient hot water delivery, smart landscape design, and many other features to ensure that the home will save water for years to come.

WHAT ARE WATERSENSE LABELED CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS?

WaterSense labels certification programs for landscape irrigation professionals that advance water-efficient irrigation techniques and practices. An irrigation professional certified by a WaterSense labeled program can design, install, maintain, or audit your irrigation system to ensure it uses the right amount of water to maintain a healthy landscape.

HOW IS EPA COORDINATING WITH LOCAL WATER UTILITIES?

Hundreds of water utilities have partnered with EPA to promote WaterSense and encourage consumers to look for the label. Many already work to increase the water efficiency of residential and commercial irrigation systems. Utilities are encouraged to partner with WaterSense and use the program as part of their local water efficiency and conservation efforts.

HOW DOES EPA WORK WITH COMMERCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FACILITIES?

EPA developed *WaterSense at Work*, a compilation of water efficiency best management practices, to help commercial and institutional facilities understand and better manage their water use. It later launched the H₂Otel Challenge to encourage hotels to ACT—assess, track, and change their water use.

WHAT MORE CAN WE DO TO SAVE WATER FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS?

You can reduce your water use by as much as 30 gallons per day by taking a few simple steps, such as fixing leaks, turning off the tap when brushing your teeth, and looking for the WaterSense label when purchasing water-using products. Information on how to use water efficiently is posted on our website, www.epa.gov/watersense, where you can also sign up for the *WaterSense Current* e-newsletter.