



Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

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For Immediate Release – March 10, 2009

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March 16-20: Fix a Leak Week

MADISON - How long will you ignore that drip in the shower? How about the leaky spigot outside the house, or that running toilet? Household leaks waste both valuable water resources and money. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) the average household can leak up to 11,000 gallons of water per year—enough to fill a backyard swimming pool!

That's why the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) is promoting “Fix a Leak Week” during March 16 to 20 to remind homeowners to check their plumbing fixtures and irrigation systems for leaks. Common types of leaks found in the home include leaking toilet flappers, dripping faucets, and other leaking valves. Fixing easily corrected household water leaks can save homeowners more than 10 percent on their water bills.

PSC Chairperson Eric Callisto noted, “Leaky faucets and toilets waste our precious water resources, and fixing leaks is one of the cheapest and easiest ways to conserve water and save energy.”

To check for leaks in your home, first determine whether you're wasting water, then identify the source of the leak. Check your water meter before and after a two-hour period when no water is being used. If the meter changes at all, you probably have a leak.

Toilets:

- If your toilet runs constantly, you could be wasting 200 gallons of water or more every day. Place a drop of food coloring in the toilet tank. If any color shows up in the bowl before you flush, you have a leak. (Be sure to flush immediately after the experiment to avoid staining the tank.)
 - If your toilet is leaking, the cause is most often an old, faulty toilet flapper. Over time, this inexpensive rubber part decays, or minerals build up on it. It's usually best to replace the whole rubber flapper—a relatively easy, inexpensive do-it-yourself project that pays for itself in no time.

Faucets and Showerheads:

- A leaky faucet that drips at the rate of one drip per second can waste more than 3,000 gallons per year. Leaky faucets can be reduced by checking faucet washers and gaskets for wear and replacing them if necessary.

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- A showerhead leaking at 10 drips per minute wastes more than 500 gallons per year. That's enough water to wash 60 loads of dishes in your dishwasher.
- Most leaky showerheads can be fixed by ensuring a tight connection using pipe tape and a wrench.

Outdoors:

- An irrigation system should be checked each spring before use to make sure it was not damaged by frost or freezing. An irrigation system with pressure set at 60 pounds per square inch that has a leak 1/32nd of an inch in diameter (about the thickness of a dime) can waste about 6,300 gallons per month.
- Check your garden hose for leaks at its connection to the spigot. If it leaks while you run your hose, replace the nylon or rubber hose washer and ensure a tight connection to the spigot using pipe tape and a wrench.

For more information on conserving water, visit the PSC web site at:

<http://psc.wi.gov/utilityinfo/water/conservation-index.htm>. For more information on Fix a Leak Week, visit www.epa.gov/watersense/fixaleak.

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