



Putting WaterSense® to Work

Major Restaurant Chain Slows the Flow With a Water-Saving Strategy for Success

Sector: Restaurants and Other Commercial Kitchens; Focus: Water Conservation

Project Summary

Water and sewer costs are rising an average of 8 percent per year, faster than any other utility. Restaurants, which rely on water to effectively run their kitchens, are feeling the effects of these rising costs. Arby's Restaurant Group, Inc., one of the largest restaurant chains in the United States, has worked to combat rising water and energy costs by taking steps to conserve resources and save money.

Arby's currently has more than 1,000 corporate-owned sites and nearly 3,300 total sites including franchises. The chain wanted to reduce water use in its daily operations and in 2012 began working with Ecova®, an energy and sustainability management company. By developing a strategic resource management program, Arby's has reduced per-site water use by more than 10.7 percent since 2011, accounting for approximately 107 million gallons of water and a total savings of \$1.2 million in water and wastewater costs.

A Strategy to Save Blue

Arby's worked with Ecova to develop a strategic resource management program as a guide for how the chain would implement its water-saving efforts. Arby's executives and other leaders attended stakeholder interviews to explore and identify water-efficient practices appropriate to the large chain. Following the interviews, Ecova conducted water audits at a sample set of restaurants to identify measures Arby's could take to increase its water efficiency practices.

Central to the program was a strategic plan focused on five categories: data, employee engagement, facility optimization, marketing and reporting, and continual improvement. Arby's leadership team regularly consulted the strategic plan to align and track the company's actions with their goals. The holistic nature of the program allowed Arby's to implement sustainable water and energy operations at all Arby's corporate-owned restaurants.

The chain installed high-efficiency faucet aerators on hand sinks in its restaurants, using vandal-proof units to ensure they would remain on the faucets. Installing the aerators proved to be one of the most difficult challenges in the process, as faucets were not uniform among the 1,000-plus restaurants. Arby's did, however, attempt to find high-efficiency aerators of different sizes and types to meet the installation needs of its different branches. Unlike the high-efficiency aerators, Arby's was able to install the same model of WaterSense labeled pre-rinse spray valves in all its kitchens, which can save each restaurant \$115 to \$240 per year. Each restaurant also upgraded to ENERGY STAR® certified ice machines.

Highlights



- **Facility Name:** Arby's
- **Location:** 3,300 restaurants in the United States, Canada, Turkey, and Qatar
- **Water savings:** 107 million gallons of water since 2011.
- **Cost savings:** \$1,200,000

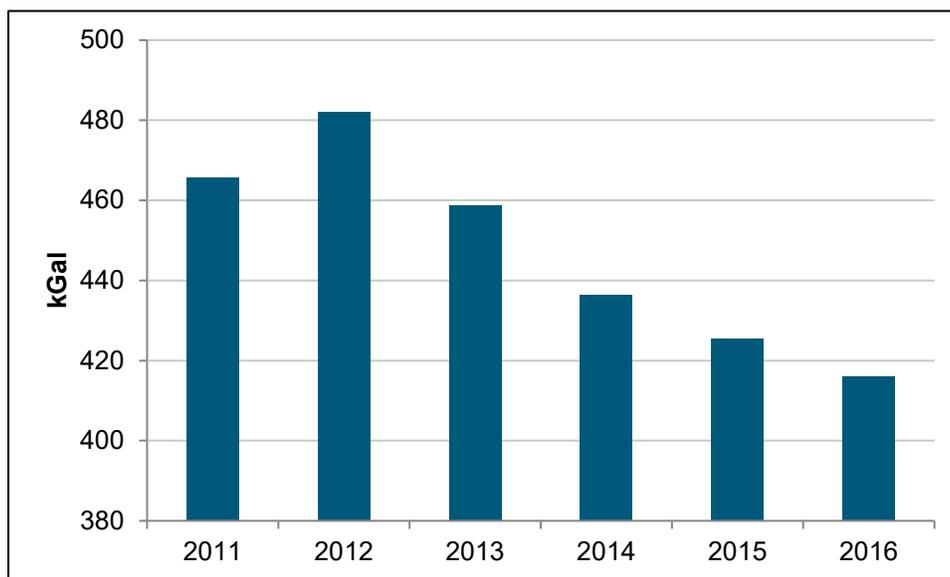


The water assessments and water bill analysis showed that irrigation accounted for 40 percent of Arby's total water consumption on average. To reduce its outdoor water usage, the chain installed WaterSense labeled irrigation controllers at 135 sites to date resulting in 30 to 70 percent reductions in irrigation water consumption—a 25 percent reduction of total water usage on average per site. Arby's specifically uses irrigation controllers that allow the restaurants to monitor and manage the irrigation system through an online platform. To teach landscapers how to properly operate the controllers, Arby's offered a series of webinars to ensure they were properly using the system. The original irrigation pilot at 85 restaurants saved Arby's 7.4 million gallons of water in six months—enough to fill more than 11 Olympic-sized pools. This resulted in an average savings of \$1,150 in water and sewer costs per site annually. Based on the success of this project and the potential to apply similar strategies to reduce irrigation water use across Arby's entire portfolio, the Arby's irrigation program won Environmental Leader's Project of the Year award in 2016.

Looking to the Future

Implementing water-efficient practices has reduced Arby's water usage by 10.9 percent per restaurant since 2011. The chain is also developing corporate 2020 water reduction goals, and its next step will be to upgrade its restaurants' bathrooms with WaterSense labeled toilets and flushing urinals.

Figure 1: Arby's Avg. Water Use per Site 2011 through 2016



Although Arby's mainly implemented its water-saving practices in its corporate-owned restaurants, it has provided its franchisees with a successful framework to implement water efficiency. By identifying equipment, appliances, and best practices, as well as recommending tested and approved suppliers and vendors, Arby's is able to apply lessons learned from water and energy management to help franchisees follow suit and reduce their impact.

Acknowledgements

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Learn More

To learn more about water efficiency in commercial and institutional buildings, visit the WaterSense website at www.epa.gov/watersense/commercial-buildings to access *WaterSense at Work* best management practices, tools, case studies, and more.