



WaterSense at Work

Getting Started With Water Management

1.3 Education and Outreach



Best Management Practices for
Commercial and Institutional Facilities



November 2023

WaterSense® is a voluntary partnership program sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that seeks to protect the nation’s water supply by transforming the market for water-efficient products, services, and practices.

WaterSense at Work is a compilation of water efficiency best management practices intended to help commercial and institutional facility owners and managers from multiple sectors understand and better manage their water use. It provides guidance to help establish an effective facility water management program and identify projects and practices that can reduce facility water use.

An overview of the sections in *WaterSense at Work* is below. This document, covering water efficiency education and outreach, is part of **Section 1: Getting Started With Water Management**. The complete list of best management practices is available at www.epa.gov/watersense/best-management-practices. WaterSense has also developed worksheets to assist with water management planning and case studies that highlight successful water efficiency efforts of building owners and facility managers throughout the country, available at www.epa.gov/watersense/commercial-buildings.

- **Section 1. Getting Started With Water Management**
 - **Section 2. Water Use Monitoring**
 - **Section 3. Sanitary Fixtures and Equipment**
 - **Section 4. Commercial Kitchen Equipment**
 - **Section 5. Outdoor Water Use**
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This document is one section from *WaterSense at Work: Best Management Practices for Commercial and Institutional Facilities* (EPA-832-F-23-003). Other sections can be downloaded from www.epa.gov/watersense/best-management-practices. Sections will be reviewed and periodically updated to reflect new information. The work was supported under contract 68HERC20D0026 with Eastern Research Group, Inc. (ERG).

Overview

User education is a cost-effective way to enhance your facility's water efficiency efforts. Even small changes in user behavior can result in significant water savings. Educating building occupants on using water efficiently is essential to any organization's water conservation efforts and is especially important during drought. Education can also help ensure anticipated savings are realized when water-efficient technologies or methods are being implemented. Operations and maintenance procedures, retrofits, and replacements are most effective when employees, contractors, and visitors all understand their role in using them properly. It is also important to offer building occupants simple, straightforward ways in which they can help reduce a facility's water use, along with good reasons for doing so.

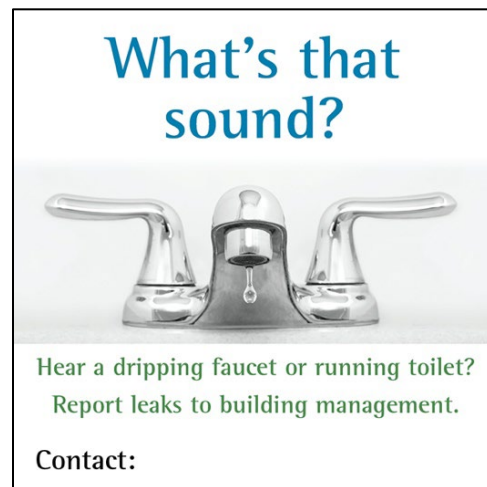
Best Practices

There are a number of best practices to educate employees and other building occupants and visitors on water savings to promote success. Reducing leaks is a good place to start, but there are a variety of things a business or institution can do to encourage water-saving initiatives and behaviors.

Encourage Leak Reporting

Leaks can easily be overlooked but have the potential to waste large amounts of water. Encourage employees and visitors to report any leaks to maintenance staff and consider these tips.

- Train relevant custodial, cleaning, and maintenance personnel, as well as other employees and visitors, to identify and report leaks. See *WaterSense at Work Section 2.2: Leak Detection and Repair* at www.epa.gov/watersense/best-management-practices for more information about identifying and repairing leaks.
- Make it easy to report leaks by setting up a communications system such as a hotline. Be sure to repair leaks promptly.
- Use the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) resources for promoting leak detection and reporting within commercial and institutional facilities



Example signage to encourage leak reporting

discussed in the following sub-bullets. They can be found on the WaterSense program's Fix a Leak Week webpage at www.epa.gov/watersense/fix-leak-week.

- Use signage, such as the WaterSense program's lavatory stickers shown on the previous page, which can be customized with maintenance staff contact information, within bathroom stalls, on mirrors, and next to faucets to encourage leak reporting.¹
- Periodically distribute materials to help employees quickly identify leaks. WaterSense offers two checklists, "Fight Leaks and Water Waste in your Facility with WaterSense" and "Stop, Look, and Listen," to encourage simple inspections to look for leaks and reduce water.
- Celebrate Fix a Leak Week, which is sponsored by the WaterSense program, annually during the third week of March, by reminding employees to look for leaks at work and home.



Employee and Occupant Education

Consider the following approaches when educating employees and building occupants on your water efficiency initiatives:

- Share management's commitment to sustainability and water efficiency. Inform employees and building occupants about corporate goals to reduce water consumption. Let employees know if the facility is participating in any national green building programs, standards, or voluntary guidelines, such as the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED® Rating Systems. Refer to *WaterSense at Work Section 1.4 Codes, Standards, and Voluntary Programs for Water Efficiency* at www.epa.gov/watersense/best-management-practices for more information.

¹ Example signage can be found at www.epa.gov/watersense/fix-leak-week.

- Incorporate sustainability and water efficiency information into employee training, especially for new hires. Use orientations as an opportunity to educate employees at all levels on the facility's water efficiency initiatives, goals, and procedures. Train maintenance personnel, operators, and supervisors on any new or revised procedures involving water efficiency. Include onsite contractors and vendors in relevant training, where possible.
- Share specific information on water efficiency goals. Graph and post quarterly or monthly water use figures so that building occupants can stay informed about the facility's progress and become invested in water efficiency efforts. Provide usage data to building tenants so they can track water-saving progress.
- Communicate water efficiency and sustainability messages through as many communication channels as possible. Create point-of-use reminders to reinforce positive behaviors (e.g., post instructions next to dual-flush toilets). Discuss the company's water management program in staff meetings, posters, emails, newsletters, and other communications.
- Include water efficiency messages at facility-wide events, such as fairs, open houses, or Earth Day events.

Make Water Efficiency Engaging

The following are some creative ways to get employees involved in recognizing the importance of water efficiency at work:

- Create a "Green Team" to tackle environmental issues and sustainability topics in and around the facility. Cross-departmental green teams can help promote communication across the organization and increase employee engagement.

Global Entertainment Company Gets Employees Involved in Sustainability

Caesar Entertainment's CodeGreen strategy began as an employee-driven initiative for the company, and it continues to grow through employee participation and interest. Each property has a CodeGreen team made up of employees from different departments and job functions, such as facilities, foodservice, and housekeeping, who suggest and implement environmental initiatives at Caesars.

Caesars also has a program that rewards employees who complete sustainability projects; employees earn credits and compete against their colleagues across the country. The Caesars Code Rewards program encourages information sharing so participants can learn how to approach practical water- and energy-saving measures. It also offers the chance to win prizes, such as an overnight trip to a Caesars property. In addition, Caesars launched CodeGreen at Home, which rewards employees for sustainability initiatives implemented at home, including water conservation, waste reduction, and energy conservation.

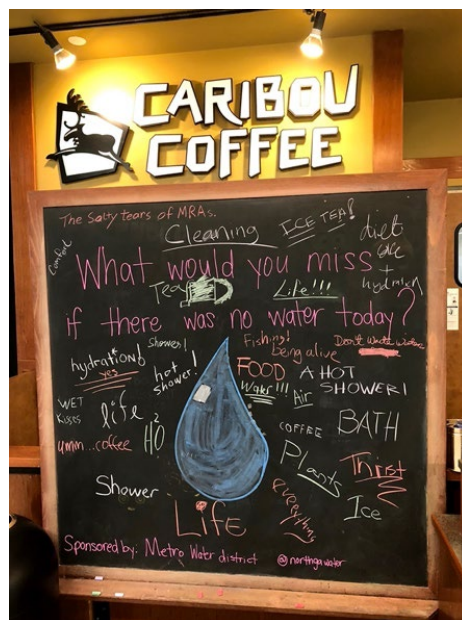
For more information, read the case study at: www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2017-01/documents/ws-commercial-casestudy-caesars.pdf

- Hold events related to water efficiency within the facility periodically throughout the year to educate building occupants and celebrate successes. Earth Day, Fix a Leak Week, and World Water Day are good opportunities to bring attention to water efficiency.
- Consider holding a contest or competition to encourage water use reductions among building occupants, tenants, maintenance staff or other employees. Acknowledge those who identify successful projects or provide group awards for major successes. Check out ENERGY STAR's building competition guide at www.energystar.gov/buildings/save_energy_commercial_buildings/ways_save/energy_saving_competitions for step-by-step details to launch your own energy or water competition.
- Start a process to recognize and encourage water-saving ideas in the facility. Include a mechanism to acknowledge submissions and provide information on how they were addressed.
- Provide incentives to building occupants and employees to promote water savings. Consider rewarding guests for participating in towel and linen reuse programs at hotels or employees for meeting challenges to reduce building water use.

Provide Water Efficiency Tips

Periodically remind building occupants and employees of common tips they can follow to help reduce water use, including some of the following, where relevant.

- Turn off the tap while scrubbing dishes in community kitchen areas.
- When using the dishwasher, wash only full loads.
- Look for and report leaky bathroom and kitchen fixtures or other leaks to the appropriate personnel.
- Sweep instead of rinsing off sidewalks, kitchen floors, or other areas.
- Don't irrigate landscapes during the middle of the day or when it is raining.
- Report broken or improperly positioned irrigation sprinkler heads that spray water on sidewalks or pavement.
- To help building occupants learn more about how they can be water-efficient at work or at



WaterSense partner Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District collaborated with a local Caribou Coffee to offer coffee discounts to customers who answered water-focused trivia questions posted on a chalkboard

home, direct them to the WaterSense website at www.epa.gov/watersense for more information.

Outreach to Visitors and Audiences Outside the Facility

Consider the following when looking to broaden the outreach of your facility's water efficiency efforts:

- Work with local utilities to participate in their commercial and institutional water conservation programs and to share success stories with other facilities.
- Create displays presenting facility water savings for the facility lobby and other public reception areas.
- Use signage, brochures, and other promotional materials to inform visitors, customers, and others about the facility's water efficiency program and actions people can take in restrooms or other areas to save water.
- Consider creating a weekly campaign. The City of Charlottesville, Virginia, created Water Tip Wednesday to share water conservation tips with employees and visitors. Tips can be posted to your social media accounts or displayed in a common area of your facility.

Additional Resources

ENERGY STAR. Energy-Saving Competitions.

www.energystar.gov/buildings/save_energy_commercial_buildings/ways_save/energy_saving_competitions.

ENERGY STAR. October 2016. ENERGY STAR Guide to Energy & Water Efficiency Competitions in Buildings & Plants. www.energystar.gov/buildings/tools-and-resources/energy-efficiency-competition-guide.

EPA's WaterSense program. Fix a Leak Week. www.epa.gov/watersense/fix-leak-week.

EPA's WaterSense program. Save With Us. www.epa.gov/watersense/save-us.

U.S. Department of Energy Better Buildings. Water Savings Network.

<https://betterbuildingssolutioncenter.energy.gov/special-initiatives/water-savings-network>.

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