

Restaurant Water Efficiency Checklist

This checklist will help facility managers evaluate the appropriateness of water-saving adjustments for improving the efficiency of your restaurant. Remember, water savings often bring energy savings, too.

The checklist has been adapted from a publication of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

This simple checklist can get you on your way to reducing water use and improving the efficiency of your facilities.

Kitchen

About half of the water used in restaurants is used in the kitchen areas.

- Turn off the continuous flow used to wash the drain trays of the coffee/milk/soda beverage island. Clean thoroughly as needed.
- Reduce the flow to dipper wells (troughs) for ice cream and butter scoops, and other frequently used utensils.
- Adjust ice machines to dispense less ice if ice is being wasted.
- Presoak utensils and dishes in basins of water, rather than in running water.
- Replace automatic shut-off spray nozzles, which can use as much as 4.5 gallons of water each minute, with low-volume nozzles using 2.0 gallons per minute.
- Do not use running water to melt ice in bar sink strainers.
- Turn off food preparation faucets when not in use. Consider installing foot triggers.
- Do not allow water to flow unnecessarily. Consider using automatic shut-off faucets at bar sinks.

Dishwasher hints

- Wash only full loads in the dishwashers.
- Replace the spray heads to reduce flow.
- Turn dishwashers off when dishes are not being processed.

Be water thrifty

- Reuse the rinse water from the dishwasher as flush water in garbage disposal units.
- Use water from the steam table, instead of fresh water, to wash down the cook's area.
- Serve water only upon request.

Restrooms

- Repair leaks! A leaking toilet can waste more than 50 gallons of water each day, and a dripping faucet or showerhead can waste up to 1,000 gallons per week.
- Replace existing faucets that use as much as 2.5 gallons per minute with those that use only 1.5. In most cases, low-volume faucet aerators can be installed when the entire faucet does not need replacing.

Water use in toilets can be reduced by:

- Installing toilet tank water displacement devices, such as toilet dams, bags or weighted bottles.
- Retrofitting flushometer (tank-less) toilets with water-savings diaphragms, which save one gallon (20 percent) per flush.
- Replacing toilets with low-volume models. Toilets can use as much as 4.5 gallons per flush, while low-volume toilets use only 1.6 gallons per flush.

Water use in urinals can be reduced by:

- Setting urinals with programmable automatic flush valves to a water saving mode that flushes the urinal after more than one use.
- Replacing urinals with low-volume models. Urinals can use as much as 5 gallons per flush, while low-volume urinals use only 1 gallon per flush.
- Installing waterless urinals.

Building maintenance

General

- Check the plumbing for leaks, and turn off unnecessary flows.
- Read water meters monthly. Compare the results to the same month of the previous year. This will help to identify leaks as they occur, as well as monitor your conservation efforts.
- Check the pressure. Where system pressure is higher than 60 psi, install pressure-reducing valves.
- Reduce excessive blowdown. Many cooling towers operate below the suggested levels of total dissolved solids unnecessarily. Adjust boiler and cooling tower blowdown rate to maintain TDS at levels recommended by manufacturers' specifications.
- Shut off water-cooled air conditioning units when not needed, or replace water-cooled equipment with air-cooled systems.

Cleaning

- When cleaning with water is necessary, use budgeted amounts.
- Switch from "wet" carpet cleaning methods, such as steam, to "dry," powder methods.
- Consider changing window cleaning schedules from "periodic" to "as required."

Outdoor water use

Landscaping

- Water your landscape only when needed. Look for signs of wilt before watering established plants.
- Water early in the morning or in the evening when wind and evaporation are lowest.
- Install an automatic rain shut-off device on sprinkler systems.
- Consider using low-volume irrigation, such as a drip system.
- Avoid runoff. Make sure sprinklers are directing water to landscape areas, and not to parking lots, sidewalks or other paved areas.
- Adjust the irrigation schedule for seasonal changes. Sprinklers generally do not have to be run as often in cooler weather, or during the rainy season.

- Consider using drought-tolerant, low-maintenance plants.

General

- Be sure all hoses have shut-off nozzles.
- Use a broom, rather than a hose, to clear sidewalks, driveways, loading docks and parking lots.
- Wash vehicles only when needed.
- Investigate the availability of reclaimed water for irrigation and other approved uses.

Make it a company policy

- Educate employees about the importance and benefits of water conservation. Materials may be available from your local water supplier.
- Create water conservation suggestion boxes, and place them in prominent areas.
- Install signs in restrooms, and display information on tables, encouraging water conservation.
- Assign an employee to evaluate water conservation opportunities and effectiveness.

Any retrofitting and/or plumbing changes to facilities must be consistent with regulatory agencies. Check with the appropriate agencies before making changes.