



# THE SPIGOT

from the NORTH DAKOTA RURAL WATER SYSTEMS ASSOCIATION

## WaterSense Showerheads Help Save Water, Energy

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Showering is one of the leading ways people use water in the home, accounting for nearly 17 percent of residential indoor water use, or about 30 gallons per household per day. That's nearly 1.2 trillion gallons of water used in the United States annually just for showering, or enough to supply the water needs of New York and New Jersey for a year.

WaterSense®, a partnership program sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), is helping consumers identify high-performance, water-efficient showerheads that reduce water and energy in the home and help preserve the nation's water resources.

The WaterSense label is an easy way for consumers to identify showerheads that have been independently tested and certified to use 20 percent less water and perform as well or better than standard showerheads.

### A Shower of Savings

The average household could save more than 2,300 gallons per year by installing WaterSense labeled showerheads. Since these water savings will reduce demands on water heaters, households will also save energy. In fact, a household could save 300 kilowatt hours of electricity annually, enough to power its television use for about a year.

If every household in the United States installed WaterSense labeled showerheads, the country could save more than \$1.5 billion in water utility bills and more than 250 billion gallons of water annually, which could supply more than 2.5 million U.S. homes with their water needs for a year. In addition, it could avoid about \$2.5 billion in energy costs for heating water.



### The WaterSense Label

All products bearing the WaterSense label must be tested and certified by an approved third party laboratory to ensure they meet EPA water efficiency and performance criteria. Standard showerheads use 2.5 gallons of water per minute (gpm). Showerheads that earn the WaterSense label must demonstrate that they use no more than 2 gpm. The WaterSense label also ensures that these products provide a satisfactory shower that is equal to or better than conventional showerheads on the market.

### Performance Is Key

As with all WaterSense specifications, EPA included performance criteria to ensure that consumers will not have to sacrifice a good shower in order to achieve water savings. EPA worked with a variety of stakeholders – including consumers who tested various showerheads – to develop criteria for water coverage and spray intensity. Independent laboratories test showerheads for these attributes before certifying them to earn the WaterSense label.

### Look for the Label

Whether consumers are replacing an older, inefficient showerhead or simply looking for ways to reduce water use and utility bills in their homes, looking for the WaterSense label on showerheads – along with faucets, faucet accessories, and toilets – helps identify models that save water and perform well. For more information or a list of WaterSense labeled showerheads, visit [www.epa.gov/watersense](http://www.epa.gov/watersense).

## How Do We Use Water?

Water is the essential ingredient for many aspects of daily life, from personal use to agricultural, industrial, and commercial needs. The amount of water used is usually defined in terms of withdrawals – in other words, water that is collected from the Earth’s surface or extracted from groundwater.

There are four major categories of water use in the United States:

- **Domestic.** Water used for residential, commercial, industrial, and public uses such as street cleaning, fire fighting, municipal parks, and public swimming pools. This includes both publicly supplied sources (delivered by a public or private system) and self-supplied sources (withdrawn directly from surface or groundwater, such as from privately owned wells). More than 240 million people in the United States depend on public supply systems, requiring the withdrawal of more than 43 billion gallons per day. This is quite significant, when compared to the 4 billion gallons of water per day extracted by private water systems (15 percent of households are self supplied). Historically, nearly 60 percent of the public supply is delivered to households.
- **Power Plants.** Power plants use 136 billion gallons of fresh water per day during the production of energy from fossil fuels, nuclear, or geothermal sources. Generally, water withdrawn for power plants is used for cooling purposes; power plants use 136 billion gallons of fresh water per day.
- **Agricultural.** Water used to irrigate farm crops, for livestock, dairies, feedlots, fish farms, and other farm needs. Agricultural irrigation accounts for more than 142 billion gallons of fresh water per day.
- **Industrial & Mining.** Water used for cooling in factories and washing and rinsing in manufacturing processes. Some of the major water-use industries include mining, steel, paper, and associated products, as well as chemicals and associated products. Industrial facilities withdraw more than 20 billion gallons of fresh water per day.

## Water Use: Drop It When It’s Hot

When the mercury on the thermometer rises, so does water use. “Peak” water use describes the time of year when residential water use is at its highest, usually in late-July or early-August, depending on the area. Lawn watering, car washing, filling backyard pools, and even

washing beach towels more frequently all adds up to about four times as much water or more than is used the rest of the year!

## Why Should Peak Water Use Matter to Me?

In addition to putting a strain on local water supplies, peak water use can hurt the wallet. Some utilities charge more per gallon during peak season or add a “summer overage” fee to compensate for heavier demands on supply and to encourage efficiency. The good news is WaterSense has strategies to help consumers beat the water use peak in the heat and keep down utility costs.

## How Can I Beat the Peak?

Consumers can reduce their peak water use by watering only as needed, washing full loads of laundry, and using more efficient plumbing fixtures. In fact, WaterSense labeled toilets and faucets helped consumers save more than 9.3 billion gallons of water and more than \$55 million in water and sewer bills in 2008 alone. The WaterSense label is an easy way to identify plumbing fixtures that use at least 20 percent less water, even during peak water use season. Here are some more facts and tactics to try:

- The average American home uses about 260 gallons of water per day; however, during peak season the average household can use about 1,000 gallons of water in a day. Some homes use as much as 3,000 gallons on a peak day! That’s equivalent to the water a garden hose left running for nearly eight hours would waste.
- Water landscapes only when needed; very early morning or evening is best. Peak hourly use usually occurs between 6 a.m. and 9 a.m., with a secondary peak between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m.
- Wash only full loads of laundry and dishes, and scrape dishes off instead of rinsing when loading the dishwasher.
- For a summer refreshment, keep a pitcher of water in the fridge instead of running the tap until it’s cold.
- Put a handy person to work fixing leaks around the home, which can waste about 200 gallons per week.

