

Saving Power In The Shower

It's cold and frigid outside, but it doesn't matter to you. You're standing under a steady stream of hot water that soaks you warm and comfortable. Seconds turn to minutes. You're in the shower for what seems an eternity. Sound familiar?

Long, hot showers are a guilty pleasure for many of us, especially in the winter. One can't help but wonder, however, whether all those minutes standing under the shower are wasting precious water and the energy it takes to heat it.

The good news is that replacing your conventional shower head with an energy-efficient model can cut shower water use by 50% without interrupting your moments of sanctuary under the hot water.

A standard shower head will use about 5-7 gallons of water per minute. At this rate, even a 5-minute shower can consume up to 35 gallons of water! Energy-efficient models, on the other hand, will typically reduce the flow rate to 2.5 gallons per minute or less.

Energy-efficient shower heads are available in either aerated or non-aerated models. Aerated shower heads reduce the amount of water in the flow, but maintain the pressure in the stream by mixing in air with the water. They feel like a standard shower head, have a steady, even spray, and are the most popular type of energy-efficient shower head. The one drawback with aerated shower heads is that, if you're tall, you may

notice that the water has cooled a little by the time it hits your feet.

Non-aerated shower heads do not mix air into the flow of water. They maintain heat and give a good, forceful spray, but their flow "pulses". If you like the effect of massage shower heads, this one's for you.

Energy experts estimate that a family of four, with each member taking 5-minute showers daily, will save at least 14,000 gallons of water a year through the use of energy-efficient shower heads. That savings, of course, will translate into dollar figures.

That same family of four will, on average, save .27 of water and .30 of electricity a day. In short, your new shower head will pay for itself in 3-4 months.

The other important contributor to your dreamy, steamy showers is your hot water heater. Experts estimate that water heaters consume close to 20% of the energy used in the average American home. What's more, between 15 and 30 percent of that energy goes to keep a tank of water hot, just in case you need it.

So, what can you do? For starters, adjust the temperature on your water heater to 120F. For every 10F you lower the water temperature, you can save 3 percent of your water heating energy. Make sure you turn the electricity off to the tank before you adjust the temperature.

Secondly, you may consider installing an insulating blanket around

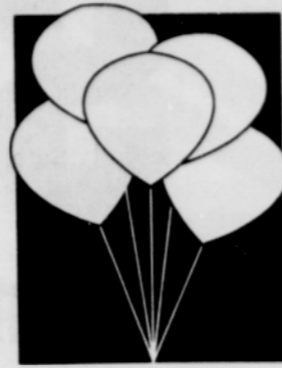
your water heater. A surprising amount of heat escapes through the sides of the tank, especially if it's stored in an unheated spot like a basement or back porch. Insulating blankets installed on older tanks can save 5 to 10 percent of the energy your hot water heater has been using.

Finally, insulate the hot and cold water pipes leaving the tank, wherever they are accessible, for at least the first five feet. Foam sleeves or adhesive-backed foam tape are available at most hardware stores. It is important, however, to keep any insulating materials at least three inches from gas flues.

A final simple step you can take to limit the amount of water your household uses is to install an energy-efficient or "low-flow" faucet aerator on kitchen or bathroom faucets. Similar to energy-efficient shower heads, aerators on kitchen or bathroom faucets will reduce the flow of water by close to 50%. However, the flow will often seem stronger as air is mixed into the water as it leaves the tap.

For our typical family of four, energy-efficient faucet aerators will save an average of 280 gallons of water a month. That's over 3,300 gallons a year for one family. On top of that, faucet aerators are relatively cheap and very easy to install.

For a free Home Energy Evaluation or more information on weatherization, call PGE at 464-2511 or 1-800-722-9287.



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To request a list of designated facilities and a map of the Metro boundary, call Metro, 797-1650. To use non-designated facilities, you must first obtain a non-system license. To apply, call 797-1685.

As the regional government responsible for solid waste management in the metropolitan area, Metro licenses waste disposal

facilities and collects user fees and excise taxes on in-region waste. Disposal of waste at undesignated facilities violates the Metro Code. Falsely claiming that waste originated outside the Metro boundary may violate criminal statutes. Violators can be charged with unpaid fees, fines up to \$500 per occurrence, and investigative costs. They may also be cited for theft by deception.

Recycling construction waste can save you money compared to disposal. For a free copy of Metro's 1994 Construction Site Recycling Handbook, call Metro Recycling Information at 234-3000.



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