

# 20 Ways to Save Water in an Emergency

**Droughts occur periodically over much of the United States. In Pennsylvania, severe droughts have occurred more frequently over the past two decades.**

During droughts, water supplies often become critically low. In some cases, whole communities are either without water or have very limited supplies. Water-use restrictions are often imposed on the residents of these communities. Priority is given to water needed for drinking and sanitation, while certain luxury uses of water, such as lawn watering and car washing, are not permitted.

A survey of communities in the Northeast, where water-use restrictions had been imposed in the past, showed that although people were willing to save water, in many instances they simply did not know how to do it.

The following is a brief listing of ways you can conserve water by modifying your everyday living habits.

1. Where possible and economically justifiable, install water-saving plumbing fixtures in the home. Consult the [Household Water Conservation](#) fact sheet, available from the cooperative extension office in your county, to learn more about water-saving textures and appliances.
2. Flush the toilet less often. In most cases, several uses can be made of the toilet for liquid wastes before flushing is required.
3. Do not use the toilet for disposing of trash, waste paper, and the like.
4. Make sure that your toilet does not leak. Place a few drops of food coloring in the toilet tank. If the colored water appears in the toilet bowl without flushing, your toilet is leaking—have it fixed immediately.
5. Fix leaking faucets. A 1/16-inch opening at 40 pounds of pressure will leak 970 gallons in 24 hours.
6. Do not let faucets run for washing or rinsing. Always fill a container with water for this purpose or use the sink by stopping the drain.
7. Do not water lawns or wash cars when water is in short supply. Also, try to water lawns and landscapes during evening or early morning to reduce evaporation from the sun.
8. Brush your teeth before shaving in the morning so the cold water in the supply line is used instead of running to waste while you wait for hot water with which to shave.
9. After brushing your teeth, use a glass of water to rinse your mouth rather than running water over the toothbrush and then using the toothbrush to rinse your mouth.
10. Keep a bottle of drinking water in the refrigerator to avoid letting water run to obtain a cold drink.
11. Do not prewash dishes for automatic dishwashers unless necessary.
12. Do not use the garbage disposal. Compost vegetable peelings on your garden or put them in the garbage can.
13. Take shorter showers. Remember, the longer you are in the shower, the more water you use.
14. Collect water from roof gutters to use for lawn and plant watering.
15. If your shower is equipped with a mixing faucet that can be set with a dial to the desired temperature, turn the shower off while soaping up. When you have finished soaping up, turn the shower back on to rinse off. If your shower is not equipped with a temperature dial, you may end up using more water as you adjust the water temperature again; consequently, this practice is not recommended for showers without automatic temperature adjustment or a shut-off valve in the shower head.
16. When shaving, use water in the washbowl to clean your razor between strokes, or use an electric razor.
17. Always use a brush, wash cloth, or your hand to dislodge particles of dirt when washing anything rather than relying on the force of the water to do the job.
18. Allow small children to bathe in the tub at the same time.
19. Use disposable diapers to avoid a toilet flush when rinsing a dirty diaper and to cut down on the amount of soiled laundry to be washed.
20. Reuse kitchen drain water by collecting it in a container and using it to water plants, lawns, and gardens or to recharge the toilet reservoir for toilet flushing (be sure it contains no large solids such as vegetable peelings).



You may not find all of these water-saving tips valuable, but some will be worthwhile. You may already be doing many of these things as part of your daily routine. However, since most of these methods of saving water involve major changes in the way you do things around the house, they are suggested for use only in emergency situations. If you feel some of these suggestions could be applied to your ordinary routines, then by all means try them.

It should be pointed out that tips concerning the proper maintenance of plumbing fixtures to eliminate leaks are applicable under any circumstances. Studies have shown that many homes have leaking toilets and faucets. The first thing you should do after reading this fact sheet is check your plumbing for leaks and have them fixed.

Updated by Bryan Swistock, water resources extension associate. Originally prepared by William E. Sharpe, professor emeritus of forest hydrology.

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