



HEALTH NEWS FROM DR. YU

Thurston County Public Health & Social Services Department

Water Conservation

Prepared June 2010

FLUSH! Through the wonders of social networking a co-worker was reminded by old camp counselor buddies about the sounds of their camp bathhouse. An important safety feature was to yell “FLUSH” beforehand, so anyone taking a shower was warned to step aside to avoid getting scalded.

Our flushing technology has come a long way. Most households can safely manage simultaneous flushing and showering. But has your flush kept up with the advances in water conservation technology?

- Today, new high-efficiency toilets get the job done with about 1.2 gallons a flush.
- Those old (pre-1980) toilets at camp and perhaps still in your home, use about 6 gallons per flush.
- Toilets installed between 1980 and 1993 use about 3.5 gallons per flush.
- Low-flow toilets, installed after 1993, are designed to use 1.6 gallons per flush.

All those water savings add up – an average household replacing a 3.5 gallon flusher with a high-efficiency toilet saves about 13,500 gallons of water a year!

Water conservation is an important way households with on-site septic systems can extend the life of their system. In fact, excessive water use is a main cause of septic system failure. A septic tank is designed as a settling chamber, slowing the untreated sewage and allowing the sludge to sink and the scum to float. The clear liquid effluent then flows out into the drainfield where the final treatment occurs. Each gallon of liquid entering a standard gravity septic tank pushes an equal amount of effluent out into the drainfield. A leaking toilet can overwhelm the drainfield and cause it to fail, requiring expensive repairs.

Take a closer look; many leaks can be stopped with a simple repair. Consider replacing an older toilet with a new high-efficiency toilet. The less water used, the less wastewater that needs to be treated.

More tips on septic system care, including lists of certified septic pumpers and other professionals, are found on our website:

- www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehoss/
- Or call the Septic Help Line to leave a message at 360-867-2669.

Homes connected to sewer can also benefit from water conservation. Customers who receive LOTT sewer service through the cities of Lacey, Olympia, or Tumwater may be eligible for free water savings kits, rebates, or even free high-efficiency replacement toilets.

- For details visit the LOTT website: lottonline.org/rebates.htm

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