

Water Conservation Policy For County Facilities

A. General

Orange County's "Environmental Responsibility in County Government" goal includes the objective: "Initiate policies and programs that conserve energy, reduce fuel/utility/resource consumption..." In support of this goal, the County has adopted this Water Conservation Policy.

The cost for water for County facilities is a significant County cost. Beyond this, water consumption has significant environmental impacts, including direct local impacts. As a result, it is both necessary and beneficial for the County to adopt a policy of water conservation and efficiency for County government.

Energy conservation and vehicle fuel conservation are addressed in separate policies.

B. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to reduce the County government's water consumption, wherever possible, and improve the efficiency of use for that water that must be used in Orange County government facilities.

C. Policy Goals

1. Establish the policy foundation of responsibilities, planning, programs, standards, performance measures and the like to manage the County government's water use and conserve water.
2. Manage water use to minimize use to the greatest extent possible while maintaining safe and acceptable work conditions.
3. Achieve a reduction in average water consumption per square foot annually.
4. Incorporate water conservation systems, devices, and design in renovations, replacements and new construction.

D. Scope

1. Facilities

This policy applies to County owned and leased buildings, whether occupied by the County, the courts or other agencies.

2. Water Sources

This policy applies to use of water from municipal sources and wells.

E. Responsibilities

1. Energy Task Group

As provided in the County's energy conservation policy, the Manager appoints an Energy Conservation Task Group. The Task Group provides direction, counsel, and oversight as to implementation of the Water Conservation Policy. As necessary the Task Group addresses questions of policy interpretation and adherence. The Task Group also seeks input on innovative tools and techniques to support water conservation in County facilities.

2. Public Works Department

The Public Works Department is responsible for:

- Up fitting as authorized and maintaining County facilities in accordance with the requirements of this policy, including installation of water conserving devices and verification of correct equipment settings and operation.
- Development of the annual Water Conservation Action Plan and identifying any associated costs, as part of the annual budget process.

3. Department Heads

Department heads are responsible for:

- Communicating the County's water conservation goals and policies to staff, providing guidance and promoting adherence.

4. Employees

County employees are responsible for:

- Becoming knowledgeable about the County's water conservation policies and initiatives and complying with these policies.
- Advising the supervisor of any circumstance that prevents adherence to the County's policies.
- Bringing forward ideas and suggestions for water conservation that may not have been identified to them.

F. Water Conservation Action Plan

1. The Energy Task Group, Public Works Department and others involved coordinate the development of an annual "Water Conservation Action Plan."

2. This annual plan identifies specific actions to be implemented or proposed and estimated time lines and responsibilities for implementation.
3. The action plan is submitted to the Board of County Commissioners for review and approval, in coordination with the annual budget process.
4. The action plan is reviewed and updated annually along with evaluation of the previous year's performance, during the annual budget process.

G. Reporting, Benchmarking and Performance Measurement

1. Reporting

The Public Works department:

- Obtains information for all billing periods for each water billing to provide reports on a monthly/quarterly and annual basis assessing progress, by building and/or department where feasible as well as for the County as a whole, in reducing water demand. This includes analysis of the information and assessment of trends.
- Presents reports to department heads and the County Manager to aid in determining if conservation efforts are meeting goals or additional efforts are required.
- Presents reports to the Board of County Commissioners to advise them of progress in conserving water.

2. Benchmarking/Performance Measurement

Reporting information is used to benchmark and measure performance:

- From year-to-year (aggregate and by individual building) in keeping with accepted industry practices, and
- Compared to results for organizations located in similar geographic areas.

H. Water Use Standards

1. General

The intent of the water conservation policy and program is to achieve reductions in water consumption while maintaining reasonable comfort levels for building occupants.

2. Waterless or low-flow fixtures are used for any replacement fixtures, unless technically impractical.

3. The County gives preference to drought-tolerant plants when new or replacement plants and/or trees are required for landscaping. Large areas of grass are avoided in favor of alternative plantings and landscaping techniques, whenever possible.
4. Irrigation is limited to critical needs to support survival of plants, and if allowed by local watering restrictions. Permanently installed irrigation systems are preferred to provide most efficient distribution of water.
5. Vehicle washing is performed only as permitted by local watering restrictions. If performed, it is done only with water conserving spraying devices rather than an open garden hose. Rain collection for vehicle washing is pursued as feasible.

I. Programs

To support the Water Conservation Policy and initiative, the County implements a variety of programs including:

1. Employee Awareness/Public Awareness

The County conducts communications programs to promote employee awareness of the need for water conservation. This includes such activities as distribution of this Water Conservation Policy, reminders via pamphlets, e-mails, Orange Alive, coverage in new employee orientation, and opportunities at employee events to reinforce the conservation ethic.

As appropriate, the County also informs the public of water conservation measures in use such in County restrooms or in grounds care activities.

2. Incentives

Incentive programs will be developed to improve compliance and acceptance by County employees and other building occupants. These may include building versus building contests, department versus department contests, financial incentives, preferred parking, recognition of employees who demonstrate the conservation ethic and the like.

3. Preventive Maintenance

Preventive maintenance procedures are used to eliminate water loss through drips and leaks

4. Repairs

Repairs/replacement of equipment take into consideration the most cost effective solution over the life of the repair/equipment. Such consideration includes improvements to water efficiency.

5. Low Demand Retrofits

The County determines priority needs and pursues water conserving system retrofitting, based on the availability of funds and maintenance needs such as the condition of the equipment.

6. New Construction

New construction is required to follow water efficiency standards as set forth by the Guidelines for Sustainable Public Facility Design and Development. Consideration is given to the feasibility of rainwater collection for non-potable uses