

Fix a Leak Week is March 16 – 22

Annual campaign promotes simple steps to save water, the environment, and money

It is not a federal holiday, but Fix a Leak Week, from March 16 through 22, has become an annual observance for many water utilities, plumbing companies, environmental protection advocates, and frugal homeowners. The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC) and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) are teaming up this year to provide helpful tips to consumers.

“Whether they are visible or underground, water leaks can waste significant amounts of consumers’ money,” said Indiana Utility Consumer Counselor David Stippler. “Fix a Leak Week is an important reminder for all of us to check for leaks at our homes or businesses, and to repair them as quickly as possible.”

“Maintaining plumbing fixtures will lower a property’s water bill and protect the environment,” said Thomas Easterly, Commissioner of IDEM. “The individual actions of 6.5 million Hoosiers can add up to a huge collective impact.”

Fixing leaks is a way to conserve and maintain water supplies. Steps homeowners take can translate to reduced costs for drinking water utilities and wastewater treatment facilities. And saving water at home helps save wasted energy.

Tips for finding leaks

How do you know if you have a leak? One way is to look at your water meter before and after a two-hour period when no water is being used. If the meter changes, you probably have a leak.

Another method is to put a drop of food coloring in the toilet tank. If any color shows up in the bowl after 15 minutes, you have a leak. (*Flush immediately following the experiment to avoid staining the tank.*)

Look for signs on the outside surface of pipes, too. Check for drips and wet areas around faucet gaskets and pipe fittings.

To check plumbing fixtures, check worn-out flappers in toilet tanks, washers and gaskets on faucets, and showerhead connections. When the weather warms up, check outside spigots and hose connections to ensure they are tight. Professionals may need to be consulted for spring maintenance or inspections on lawn irrigation systems.

Tips for fixing leaks

Some repairs are simple enough for the homeowner to perform. YouTube and the Do-It-Yourself Network provide useful tutorials and references. Large or complicated leaks and difficult repairs might require the help of someone with more experience or a professional.

Tips for being “water smart”

To conserve water around the home, turn off the water while brushing teeth or shaving, wash full loads of dishes and laundry, and take showers instead of baths. Install aerators and devices to lower the water flow. When you install new fixtures, look for the WaterSense label and other high-efficiency products.

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For outdoor irrigation, choose low-flow sprinkler heads or drip irrigation systems that deliver water to the plants' roots and minimize losses due to wind, run-off, evaporation or overspray. Install rainfall shutoff devices on irrigation systems. Use a soil moisture sensor to know when watering is necessary.

Leaks around the home can cost a homeowner more than 10,000 gallons of wasted water each year, or the amount of water needed to wash 270 loads of laundry. The good news is that most replacement parts and repairs do not require a major investment, and simple repairs can save homeowners about 10 percent on their water bills.

Commercial and industrial customers should regularly conduct water audits at all facilities to locate leaks, fix them as quickly as possible, and avoid expensive problems that might otherwise go undetected. Also, if a business or homeowner uses an outdoor irrigation system, the sprinkler heads and other parts of the system should be checked closely for leaks as part of the system's regular spring tune-up.

For additional tips on saving water and saving money around the house, visit the Hoosiers Care website at www.HoosiersCare.IN.gov, or the OUCC's site at www.IN.gov/oucc/2394.htm.

About the OUCC

The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (www.oucc.IN.gov) represents Indiana consumer interests before state and federal commissions that regulate utilities. As a state agency, the OUCC's mission is to represent all Indiana consumers to ensure quality, reliable utility services at the most reasonable prices possible through dedicated advocacy, consumer education, and creative problem solving.

About IDEM

IDEM (www.idem.IN.gov) implements federal and state regulations regarding the environment. Through compliance assistance, incentive programs and educational outreach, the agency encourages and aids businesses and citizens in protecting Hoosiers and the environment.

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