



BUSINESS

In water-stressed South Africa, concerns of a looming water crisis are under the spotlight. It has been stated that if the country continues at its present rate of consumption, South Africa could run out of drinking water by 2025. At least 60% of the country's water resource is used in farming irrigation. Alien invasive plants are said to use 7% of South Africa's potential drinking water. Over the next 20 years demand for water in Gauteng is expected to increase by 30%. Urgent action is required by all role players.

Water Neutrality is a global process of installing water savings projects and initiatives that will offset the amount water used by either a company or a person. The practice of water neutrality is urgent as less than 3% of the world's water is fresh and drinkable, and of that, 2.5% is frozen in glaciers, leaving the world with only 0.6% of that water for all fresh water needs.

If the country wishes to avert a water shedding scenario, we need to invest in water security now. Currently, more than 98% of South Africa's available water supplies are allocated. With limited options left for new dams, ever-increasing demand owing to economic growth and unfavourable climate change predictions, we need to think innovatively about how we manage our water supplies.

Water, whether it's used for industrial processes, restrooms, or cleaning and landscaping, is a large part of any business's operating costs. But there are many ways to reduce your water use while meeting all of your business needs. Consider

implementing the following Water Wise tips in your business. Water conservation is everyone's responsibility.

1. Educate your employees and customers

All businesses can encourage their employees to conserve water by training employees in water saving techniques and providing incentives for employees who develop water saving procedures. It is important to let your customers know that water conservation is a priority to your business. Lead by example and let them know what you do to conserve will help encourage them to conserve as well.

Raising staff awareness is one of the most cost effective and sustainable ways to save water at your workplace. Simple ideas to help you save water at work include:

- Establishing an **ideas box** to encourage employees to suggest ways to save water;
- Incorporating **water conservation policies** and procedures into employee training programs;
- **Using communication tools like bulletins, newsletters and emails** to send ideas, announcements, progress reports and news of special achievements;
- Encourage water conservation in the employee kitchen, locker rooms and restrooms, using **notices that are changed regularly**;
- **Communicating water conservation plans** and progress in staff meetings and using visual tools like charts and graphs to highlight savings. Set attainable goals for water use reductions. Read water meters weekly to monitor success of your water conservation efforts and let employees know how they're doing;

- Providing **incentives** by linking water conservation measures to staff performance reviews.
- **Assign an employee** to determine and monitor the quantity and purpose of water use and to identify water waste.
- When cleaning with water, use budgeted amounts.
- **Encourage the reporting of leaks** including those in ablutions.

2. Think smaller. Many small offices have the same capacity geyser that is used in homes. But there is no showering or laundry to be done, only light dishwashing. Therefore you can save costs by installing a smaller geyser better suited to your needs.

3. Have a water audit

Conduct a water audit. This will help you maximise your water use efficiency. It also highlights where problems exist and assists in helping you fix them, thereby increasing your water savings.

Keeping track of water used by measuring the meter during periods of no flow will allow you to track possible leaks. Monthly water audits also allow for the tracking of water use in different seasons.

4. Fix leaks

Businesses can save money and water by monitoring and repairing leaky faucets, toilets and pipes. Leaky or dripping toilets and faucets can waste thousands of litres a year. Each dripping tap can waste as much as 1Kl of water a month. Regular maintenance will eliminate water waste and lower your water bills. Have your water meter read monthly to monitor your water usage.

5. Replace water wasting equipment and fixtures

Install low-flow aerators on company faucets (taps) and you can cut faucet water consumption in half. This can significantly reduce your business' water consumption. Toilets and urinals account for about one third of all water consumed in buildings. Install dual flush toilets and water efficient urinals. Use air-cooled ice

machines. Replace air conditioners and refrigeration units that are cooled by water with those that are cooled by air.

6. Design and maintain water efficient landscaping

It is a fact that smaller businesses with small landscapes are often bigger water wasters than larger businesses with larger gardens. Smaller businesses tend to over water their gardens.

- Lawns require a deep watering once a week. Consider reducing your lawn areas as lawns are high water users.
- Plant indigenous shrubs and plants that add colour and texture to your garden. Indigenous plants also require less water than exotics.
- Incorporate mulch and compost in your garden. Compost increases the soil's nutrient and water retaining capability. Mulch assists in reducing soil water loss by minimising evaporation and regulates soil temperature.
- Keep irrigation systems in good repair; use appropriate sprinkler heads.
- Have your irrigation system linked to a weather station or at the very least a rain sensor that will shut off the system in times of excess rain.
- Ensure your irrigation system waters only greenery and not walls and pavements.
- Operate sprinkler systems before sunrise and after sunset, and avoid irrigating during windy or rainy weather. If this is not possible, then water before 10h00 and after 14h00 in summer.
- Hire a landscape manager or service experienced in Water Wise landscaping concepts.
- For any new or re-designed landscapes, ensure that the contractor zones the garden into high, medium and low water areas, allocates the plants accordingly and also sets the irrigation system watering times to match these zones.

7. Engage top management.

As with so many interventions in business, unless there is support and buy-in from top management, programs and interventions do not take off as they could. It is important that they support it with time and funds to make the necessary changes that will benefit the organisation in the long run.

8. Water saving tips for corporate

1. Verify that your business is leak-free, many businesses have hidden water leaks.
2. Repair dripping faucets by replacing washers.
3. Check toilet tanks for leaks. Check the toilet for worn out, corroded or bent parts. These are easily replaced and relatively inexpensive. available and easily installed.
4. Have cool water on hand; store drinking water in the refrigerator. Staff can avoid letting the tap run each time they want a cool glass of water.
5. Installing an instant water heater on your kitchen sink so you don't have to let the water run while it heats up. This will

reduce heating costs for your business and save potable water.

6. Never install a water to air heat pump or air-conditioning system. Air-to-air models are just as efficient and do not waste water.
7. Sweep materials from floors instead of washing down whenever possible.
8. Install water-saving devices to decrease consumption, such as toilet dams, flow reduction valves, faucet aerators.
9. Urinals: Replace with 2 litres per minute flush valve kits or waterless urinals.
10. Dishwashers: Install efficient dishwashers

The important thing to remember is that everyone has a role to play in water conservation.

Monitoring water use is a priority for water saving. Making people more aware of water conservation at work will make them more aware of water conservation at home.

**Saving water makes good business
“cents”.**