

Technology Finally Catches Up With Toilets

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Did you know that you use more water in your bathroom than any other room in your home? Generally, you can reap your largest savings of water (and money) by making sure your bathrooms are as water-efficient as possible. By using low-flow shower heads and sink faucets combined with low and ultra-low flush toilets, the typical homeowner can save up to 30,000 gallons of water use per year, according to the American Water Works Association Research Foundation. This savings not only conserves a valuable resource but also keeps your dollars in your pocket!

Research and technology aimed at water conservation has developed many improvements that provide the homeowners with numerous options that conserve water, but still provide adequate flow and pressure. Low-flow showerheads have come a long way since the first models that saved water by restricting flow so much that it often felt like a trickle of water rather than a stream. According to a friend working in one of the local hardware stores, most customers are actually quite surprised at how well low-flow showerheads work.

Another area of bathroom technology that is finally meeting expectations is the low-flow (flush) toilet. Before 1992, toilets typically used between five and seven gallons of water per flush (gpf). In 1992, national standards adopted by Congress set the flush limit at 1.6 gpf. This decision was made without input from toilet manufacturers. At that time, research and technology had not focused on the practical aspects of achieving the new standard. As we all experienced, the new low-flush models did not perform as advertised, often resulting in needing to flush two or three times. This not only defeated the water-saving intent, but also led to consumer frustration. Manufacturers have had more than 15 years of research and development aimed at meeting the 1.6 gpf requirement. Technology advancements have produced toilets that function with a pressure-assist flush by capturing household water pressure between flushes. Other advancements include a complete redesign of the standard siphon action used in the bowl and storage flush tank re-configurations.

The newest development to hit the low-flush market is the ultra-low-flush model, which utilizes a flush option feature. This feature uses either two separate flush buttons or a multi-position handle that lets the user choose which flush is necessary. For liquid waste, it uses less than one gallon of water. These models have been used for some time in Europe and Australia as well as in the recreational vehicle market.

Even though it has taken almost 15 years, industry technology has created numerous options for homeowners and builders to choose a low-flow toilet fixture that combines water savings with performance. The best part of all is the water savings create dollar savings, so you can save money while saving one of our most precious resources: Clean water.