



Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor

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For Immediate Release
June 30, 2014

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Smart irrigation saves money and water

One of many ways to save on your water bill

July is Smart Irrigation Month, and it's a good time to make sure you're using water efficiently. This is the time of year when residential and commercial lawn watering peaks.

"Many consumers have taken steps to embrace new technology and make sure irrigation systems are working more efficiently and effectively," said Indiana Utility Consumer Counselor David Stippler. "In many cases, more than 30 percent of the drinking water pumped by a utility goes toward irrigation. This offers a great opportunity for consumers to save water and, in turn, save money."

If you water the lawn at your home or business, make the most of it by:

- Only irrigating when you need to, and knowing that there is such a thing as "overwatering." According to Purdue University research, most Indiana lawns only need watering once each week. (There are exceptions, though, especially new lawns.)
- Watering early in the morning. If you water between 4:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m., you'll minimize evaporation while maximizing saturation.
- Knowing about technological advances in irrigation systems. If you use an automatic irrigation system, consider a new or retrofitted system with a "smart controller" or sensors that will take rain or soil moisture into account and will prevent overwatering.
- Focusing on giving the grass a less-frequent "deep soaking" to help the roots grow more deeply (as opposed to watering it frequently and lightly).
- Not watering when it is windy and not using a "fine mist" from your sprinkler.

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- Keeping an eye on sprinklers and making sure they are not watering the street, driveway, sidewalk, building or gutters.
- Raising your lawnmower blade to the highest setting. If the grass is a little longer, the roots don't have to work as hard.

“Indiana is very fortunate to not be experiencing the drought-related issues we have faced in previous summers,” said Stipler. “However, consumers should always be conscious about using water efficiently, and thinking of creative ways to do so.”

Additional steps that will help you save water and money include:

- Looking for the EPA WaterSense label when shopping for new toilets, irrigation systems or other appliances.
- Checking for any leaks in faucets, toilets and the underground supply line, and fixing them right away. The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor's (OUCC's) website (www.IN.gov/OUCC) describes simple tests for toilets and supply lines.
- Using water-efficient showerheads and faucet aerators.
- Keeping showers brief.
- Shutting off the faucet while brushing teeth or shaving.
- Running the dishwasher and washing machine only when fully loaded.
- Making a “toilet dam” by filling a plastic bottle with pebbles or sand, closing it tightly, and placing it in the toilet tank. By taking up space, this will reduce the amount of water needed for flushing. Be sure that the toilet dam does not interfere with the flushing mechanisms. Also, do not use a brick since it may release chemicals that will damage the flushing apparatus.

To learn more about proper irrigation, visit www.smartirrigationmonth.org. As a partner in the EPA WaterSense initiative, the OUCC offers a number of no-cost and low-cost tips for conserving water both inside and outside the home or business. The tips are available online at www.IN.gov/OUCC or by calling the agency toll-free at 1-888-441-2494.

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The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC) represents Indiana consumer interests before state and federal bodies 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.

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