Make a Splash: Energy, Water and Cost Savings Program Returns to Minnesota

Equipment upgrades for restaurants, office buildings, hospitals, schools, and cities save energy, thousands of gallons of water and hundreds of dollars

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Media Contact: Alexis Troschinetz, Behavior Change and Metrics Coordinator
Clean Energy Resource Teams, 612-626-0455 or atroschi@umn.edu

Statewide, Minnesota – For the last year, restaurants, hospitals, schools, and cities in Minnesota have been benefitting from the energy and cost savings of conserving hot water in their kitchens and sinks.

In 2011, more than 70 participants installed efficient pre-rinse spray valves through the Minnesota Water-Saving Bulk-Buy Program, together saving 13.5 million gallons of water, enough energy to heat 90 Minnesota homes, and $180,000 a year.

The Minnesota Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs), a local community-based partnership, and Niagara Conservation, a U.S. manufacturer of water and energy saving technologies, relaunched The Minnesota Water Saving Bulk-Buy Program for pre-rinse spray valves and faucet aerators. The program combines education and technical assistance with discounts and utility rebates.

About the Technology: Pre-rinse spray valves remove food before dishes are placed in a commercial dishwasher or sanitizer. This pre-rinsing process can consume half of the water used in an entire restaurant. The latest models of pre-rinse spray valves are designed differently from traditional spray valves, decreasing the amount of water needed to achieve the expected level of water pressure, saving owners of restaurants, commercial and municipal buildings, hospitals, schools, and churches hundreds of dollars a year on their water and energy bills. Upgrading to a more efficient model can cut the costs of pre-rinsing by 57%, saving over $400 a year. This is a smart investment with a potential payback of only 1-2 months.

Installation could not be easier. “Once you’ve turned the water off, you can simply twist off the old valve, and twist on the new,” describes Tom McCay from Niagara Conservation.
**Measuring the Results:** As energy prices fluctuate, businesses and organizations are being proactive in managing their operating and energy costs. Improving equipment means working with the most up-to-date technology and locking in lower energy prices for years to come.

Oscar Reyes, owner of Los Mojarra, a growing Mexican restaurant in Minneapolis, has become a new proponent of the spray valves: “I saw a big difference in the water amount that was used with my old spray valve and realized that I don’t need a lot of water. I need good water pressure. The new spray valve has great pressure and gets the job done!”

“Faucet aerators are an effective way to save on water and energy usage,” notes Jeff Orvedal, Plant Operations Manager at RiverView Health, a hospital in Crookston. “They are cost-effective and are easy to install. And you certainly can't complain about their nearly instant payback.”

**Major Equipment Discounts:** Pre rinse spray valves (typically $68) cost $28 with the bulk-buy program, and are brought down even further to an average of $13 in areas where a utility rebate is offered. Utility rebates are currently provided by Austin Utilities, Centerpoint Energy, Minnesota Energy Resources, Owatonna Public Utilities, Rochester Public Utilities, and many more. Typical energy and water savings for major water users are $400 per year, oftentimes resulting in a one-month payback with a rebate. It doesn’t get any better than that!

Faucet aerators, also included in the bulk-buy program, are an even easier upgrade. Not only are they simple to install, but they only cost half a dollar each. The savings, however, are not small—the average Minnesotan can save 21,000 gallons and $180 per year for each aerator replaced.

To learn more and take action, visit http://mncerts.org/splash.

**About CERTs:** The Clean Energy Resource Teams connect Minnesotans with resources to identify and implement energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. CERTs is a partnership of the University of Minnesota’s Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships & Extension, Eureka Recycling, Southwest Regional Development Commission, The Minnesota Project, and the Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources.

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