

Low-flow fixtures costing water customers

By Katherine Shaver, Washington Post

Federally mandated low-flow toilets, shower heads and faucets are taking a financial toll on the nation's water utilities, leaving customers to make up the shortfall with higher water rates and new fees that have left many paying more for less.

Utility officials say they understand that charging more for water because demand has dropped might seem to violate a basic premise of Economics 101. But utilities that generally charge by the number of gallons used are beginning to feel the financial pinch of 20 years of environmentally friendly fixtures and appliances, as older bathrooms and kitchens have been remodeled, utility experts say.

Federal laws aimed at conserving water limit toilets that once needed up to seven gallons per flush to 1.6 gallons. Shower heads that spewed up to eight gallons per minute are being replaced with sprays of about 2.5 gallons.

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