

A New Place to Cut Church Operating Costs

By Klaus Reichardt

Today's church facilities face many of the same building challenges that homeowners and businesses face—rising operations and maintenance costs. In response, many facilities are now incorporating environmentally preferable features, such as switching lighting systems to low-wattage bulbs, installing double-glazed windows that maintain temperature control, and upgrading HVAC systems with more efficient and less power-hungry units.

Another area church facilities may consider when looking to cut building operation costs is in their restrooms—specifically, restroom fixtures and especially, urinals. Water and sewer rates are continually increasing throughout the United States; in Northern California, and in some other western areas, these rates are expected to double in the next 10 years. Taking steps now to conserve water can help church facilities minimize the impact of these rate increases.

Hospital Saves by Using Less

Most people are unaware that just one urinal can use as much as 40,000 gallons

of water per year. In drought stricken areas of the country, this is a huge volume of water that is simply wasted.

Some facilities are beginning to recognize this wasteful area and are seeking improvements. A California hospital, for example, removed the conventional urinals in 14 men's restrooms and installed waterless systems to see if they could actually cut building operation costs. They estimated that the old urinals used about three gallons per flush, or about 55 gallons of water per urinal per year, which calculates to a grand total of 280,000 gallons of water annually.

After installing the no-flush systems, and based on current water and sewer rates, this California hospital estimates they save from \$2,100 to \$2,500 annually. Although a relatively small cost savings on an annual basis, the hospital estimates they will save as much as \$50,000 to more than \$60,000 over the 25-year life expectancy of the urinals—a much bigger savings than anticipated. And, these figures will increase as water and sewer rates climb.

Water and Green

Many worship facilities are not only trying to cut costs, but also to do their part in helping conserve natural resources and protect our environment. Unfortunately, water conservation is often overlooked, but that is changing. In many parts of the country, water conservation is now viewed as a Green issue and a key component of the environmental movement. This means water conservation is both helping to cut operating expenses and protecting this resource for generations to come.

Klaus Reichardt is a managing partner with Waterless Co. LLC, located in Vista, California, www.waterless.com.



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