



Design Tips

Easy Green improvements for your bathroom.

by Lisa Sten, CID, CGBP

In January 2010, California officials adopted the country's first mandatory statewide green building code. The regulations, called Calgreen, will help the state meet its goal of trimming greenhouse gas emissions by 33 percent by 2020. Starting January 1st, 2011 every new building in the state will have to reduce water usage by 20 percent. Residential remodeling and new home construction will of course be affected. To continue as a national leader in green building, California's designers will rely on new plumbing products that help conserve water along with other green design tips which will prepare and educate our growing population to increase sustainability through design.

Current national standards for showerhead flow-rates is 2.5 gallons per minute (gpm); in 2011, you'll need to comply with a less than or equal to 2.0 gpm flow rate. Select an option from the new generation of cost-effective and highly efficient showerheads. Hansgrohe uses an air-injection technology that provides the feel of a higher flow rate showerhead. Delta's product with H2OKinetic Technology manages water droplet size and velocity, spray coverage and thermal dynamics—they say that the large droplet size provides more water coverage, creating a saturating sensation. Bricor uses a vacuum flow booster valve that aerates and compacts the water under pressure, and Kohler also offers several efficient shower heads with multiple spray options styled to coordinate with their existing product lines. Don't worry—the lower flow rates when combined with the new technologies shouldn't dampen your showering experience—you'll still be able to get the shampoo out of your hair!

When buying a new toilet, your designer can help to identify the best performers—which toilet will remove waste best with a single flush? Different technologies, such as "siphonic action" (pulls the waste from the bowl) or "wash-down" are to be considered. Some manufacturers will offer "gravity assist" technologies and several manufacturers offer dual-flush options to further cut down your water usage.

Touchless faucets that you've seen in public restrooms for many years (and like the one shown here) are also water savers and many residential styles are now available for your sink. Additionally, include an occupancy-sensing light switch—after a pre-set amount of time, if no motion is detected in the bathroom, the light will turn itself off.

When thoughtfully considered into your project, green design contributes at the local level in sustainability while supporting our state's green goals.

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