

# GREENWorks

## Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

A publication of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, Concord, NH (603) 271-3710

### Fix Your Flapper!

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, as a partner of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) WaterSense® program, is encouraging homeowners to find and fix leaks during the annual Fix a Leak Week. Fix a Leak Week reminds homeowners of the easy steps they can take to help save water in their community now and for future generations.

The average American household wastes more than 10,000 gallons of water each year from easy-to-fix water leaks. That's the amount of water needed to wash 270 loads of laundry. Toilet leaks are one of the most common culprits, so start your investigation for potential leaks in the bathroom.

A simple rubber part located in the bottom of a toilet tank referred to as a flapper (sometimes called a "valve seal") is the typical cause of a running toilet. The flapper does exactly what it sounds like it does. It flaps open when flushing and then flaps closed, allowing the tank to fill up again to prepare for the next flush. Over time, the flapper can become crusted with minerals or begin to decay, causing a leaky seal when closed. A leaky seal can waste up to 200 gallons per day, which can add hundreds of dollars a year in water, sewer and/or electricity (to run your well) costs. Luckily, it is easy to check your toilet for a leak and fix a faulty flapper.

If you hear your toilet running, inspect the toilet flapper using the following instructions:

1. Shut the water off to the toilet by using the shut-off valve at the back of the toilet.
2. Flush the toilet to empty the tank as much as possible.
3. Remove the flapper from the bottom of the tank by popping off the flapper from its hinge and removing the chain that connects the flapper to the flush handle. This normally requires no tools. If the tank looks dirty, it is probably just mineral deposits, as the tank only holds clean water.
4. If the flapper is cracked or warped, install a new flapper from the hardware store by reversing steps 1 through 3. A new flapper should only cost a few dollars.



Not all leaky toilets are loud. If you do not hear your toilet running, check for a silent toilet leak:

1. Remove the toilet tank lid and drop 10 food coloring drops into the tank.
2. Return the tank lid and wait 10-15 minutes.
3. Check the water in the bowl. If the water has turned the color of the dye, then it is time to inspect the toilet flapper.

By following these simple steps, you can put your leak detection skills to work and save thousands of gallons of water in the process. For more information about how to find and fix leaks and for tips on using water more efficiently, visit [www.des.nh.gov](http://www.des.nh.gov), scroll through the “A-Z List”, and click on “We’re for Water”.



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