

**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
COMMUNICATIONS**

1800 Third Street, Room 450
Sacramento, CA 95811
www.hcd.ca.gov
(916) 445-4775
Fax (916) 324-5107

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Date: July 30, 2009**

Contact: Jennifer Sweeney
Director of Communications
(916) 445-4775
jsweeney@hcd.ca.gov

The California Department of Housing and Community Development Commends the Adoption of New Graywater Standards

Sacramento – Today, after months of development by the Department of Housing and Community Development's (HCD) Codes and Standards Division, the California Building Standards Commission (CBSC) announced the adoption of the state's new graywater standards. The new standards will become effective upon filing with the Secretary of State. The anticipated filing date is August 4, 2009.

"These new graywater standards will be a big step toward reducing California's water consumption by providing cost-effective guidelines that will be beneficial to every home throughout the state," said Director Lynn L. Jacobs. "HCD and its staff recognize the importance of continually improving the state building codes and standards to help improve our sustainability.

Graywater is the wastewater that drains out of washing machines, sinks, bathtubs and showers. It can be treated for indoor use and may be used untreated in some landscape applications.

SB 1258 required HCD, in consultation with the Department of Public Health, to develop standards for the construction, installation and alteration of graywater systems for indoor and outdoor uses. HCD collaborated with stakeholder groups and other state agencies to develop the graywater standards. Staff reviewed existing standards, best practices, guidelines and other published materials to develop new standards for graywater systems. The new standards include provisions that will:

- Provide a definition for on-site "treated graywater" and direction to a quality standard
- Encourage the use of new and expanding technology by providing more flexibility through fewer mandatory requirements
- Encourage the installation of inexpensive systems without the cost of design and permits

- Set appropriate standards for different types of systems based on complexity
- Encourage the use of graywater systems because local government approval will be easier to obtain
- Remove some regulatory burdens, making systems more practical

According to the Plumbing Code, a three-bedroom home generates 160 gallons of graywater per day or 58,400 gallons per year. With the new standards, a family of four could potentially divert nearly 22,000 gallons of water per year by using graywater from the laundry system alone. The new standards may encourage the use of graywater, therefore reducing the state's overall water consumption and increase public awareness about water-conservation. After 2011, the code will be updated annually to ensure the latest technology is incorporated.

HCD provides leadership, policies and programs to preserve and expand safe and affordable housing opportunities and promote strong communities for all Californians. The Department also supports increasing the supply of housing, especially affordable housing and works to improve the state's housing conditions and the health and safety of its residents. As the lead housing department, HCD is part of the state Business, Transportation and Housing Agency.

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