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THE GREAT TOILET REBATE PROGRAM

for the City Of Tampa Water Department

*in cooperation with the
Southwest Florida Water Management District
(SWFMD P281)*

Final Report 1994

for
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by



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1. Program Overview

PROGRAM FUNDING

- The City of Tampa's "Great Toilet Rebate Program" was cooperatively funded by the Southwest Florida Water Management District. The total project cost was \$249,949.06. The Hillsborough River Basin Board of the Southwest Florida Water Management District contributed funds to the project totaling \$124,974.53. Without the generous funding of this local board, the impact this successful project has had on the water savings in the City of Tampa would have been far less. The City also contributed \$124,974.53 in funds to this project.

PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES

- The City of Tampa contracted with Volt VIEWtech to provide the administration of the program and rebate fulfillment. Volt VIEWtech's responsibilities included managing the day to day program operations, working with customers to guide them through the program, tracking all program activity after an application was received, inspecting 100% of Ultra-Low Volume Toilet (ULV) installations, preparing and issuing all rebate checks.
- The City of Tampa's responsibilities included establishing program policy, providing program marketing and promotion, and final oversight of program operations.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- The Great Toilet Rebate Program's overall objective is to encourage City of Tampa water customers to conserve water by replacing their existing high flow (over 1.6 gallons per flush) toilets with new ultra low volume toilets. Most customers with an operable high flow toilet do not consider replacement until their existing unit fails. Offering customers a rebate covering a substantial portion of the replacement cost results in the replacement of many high flow units that would not normally be replaced until far in the future.
- Provide complete Great Toilet Rebate program information to all interested residential water customers of the City of Tampa Water Department.
- Issue rebates for 2000 Ultra Low Volume toilets purchased and installed by residential water customers of the City of Tampa Water Department. 700 Rebates were targeted for single family customers. 1300 rebates were targeted for multifamily customers.

- Provide on site inspections for one hundred percent (100%) of toilets rebated through the Great Toilet Rebate program.
- At the customers request, pick up all replaced toilets and transport them for recycling at the City Of Tampa's road materials recycling center.

PROMOTION AND ADVERTISING

- Initially customers were brought into the program through a bill message on all City of Tampa water bills. This generated a consistent flow of customers for several months. When the level of customer entry into the program began dropping, two advertisements were placed in the federal employee newspaper to judge customer response to newspaper ads. Because the response level was undetectable, no further newspaper ads were placed in that newspaper. Costs for advertisements in the Tampa Tribune and the St. Petersburg Times were prohibitive. Bill inserts to city water customers have proven to be the most effective means to gain participation in the program.
- A mailing, specifically designed to explain and encourage participation in the rebate program was sent to over 325 licensed plumbers registered with the City of Tampa. The mailing was also sent to local retailers who sell plumbing supplies and toilets. A response form was included in the mailing so interested "Trade Partners" could request additional program literature, applications, and other necessary forms. The response level was very low, only 24 requested information.
- Additional contacts with "Trade Partners" occurred throughout the program using both phone and field contacts.

PROGRAM SERVICE AREA

- The City of Tampa Water Department Services customers within the City of Tampa city limits. Additional customers are Hillsborough County residents provided water service by the City of Tampa, and provided sewer service by Hillsborough County. Please find attached map in appendix area for your information which defines the City of Tampa Service Area.

PROGRAM QUALIFICATIONS

- The program was open to all residential customers of the City of Tampa Water Department.
- Single Family customer rebate levels were as follows.

1st Toilet	up to \$100 or cost, whichever was less.
2nd Toilet	up to \$80 or cost, whichever was less.
Additional toilets	up to \$50 or cost, whichever was less.

- **Multifamily customer rebate levels were as follows:**
 - Per toilet up to \$50 or cost, whichever was less.
- **There is no limit on the number of toilets rebated per customer.**
- **Single Family Customer Classifications were as follows:**
 - Single Family Home (includes individually owned condominiums, and mobile homes)
 - Duplex homes
- **Customers were considered Multifamily if there were three (3) or more living units for a water account.**
- **Duration: November 15, 1994 until all funds were expended. The final funds were expended on May 26, 1995.**
- **The original purchase receipt was required to have been dated on, or after, November 15, 1994. Original receipts were required to be submitted for each toilet rebated to prevent fraud.**
- **Rebate applicable customer costs were:**
 - The ULV toilet
 - The toilet seat
 - Parts required for the installation of the ULV toilet.
- **Installation charges were not applicable.**
- **Customers had a choice of either self-installing or contracting with a licensed plumber for the installation of the Ultra Low Volume toilets.**
- **Funds were budgeted for rebating 2,000 ULV toilets on a funds reservation basis.**

2. Rebate Methodology and Reservation Process

- Interested customers would call the rebate hotline at (813) 288-8805. They were asked if they were a customer of the City of Tampa Water Department and sent an application package consisting of:

The Great Toilet Rebate Application

A Program Guidelines Pamphlet

A Pamphlet describing the function and benefits of ULV toilets.

A listing of several ULV toilets.

- Customers were asked to complete and return the program application.
- Upon receipt of the customer application the customer information was data entered into the program software. A customer reservation number was automatically assigned by the system and used to set aside funds for the toilet rebate for 30 days.
- To eliminate the tracking of customers who never decided to participate in the program, customers were tracked upon receipt of a completed application. Many applications reached customers through sources other than the program staff. Both plumbers and retailers regularly distributed program literature and applications to their customers. Therefore any tracking of applications sent out, compared to applications received, would not have resulted in usable data.
- Customers were sent a reservation package consisting of:

Reservation Confirmation Form, advising the customer of their reservation number and providing instructions to the customer for their next step;

Homeowners Permit Application to be completed by the customer for the internal issuance of a special plumbing permit. This form was completed by all City of Tampa customers;

Contractors Compliance Certification to be completed by the installing plumber, providing installation company information to The City of Tampa Inspection Department. This form was completed for City of Tampa residents with contractor installations.

- Customers were advised to install their ULV toilet, and complete and return all applicable forms with the original toilet receipt, to the Great Toilet Rebate office.

- Upon receipt of the applicable program forms and the original receipt, all customer and toilet information was data entered into the program software.
- The customer was then issued to a program inspector who would schedule an inspection time at the customers convenience.
- All inspections were performed by Volt VIEWtech inspectors. All inspectors hired had a background in customer service and familiarity in construction. Inspectors were trained in program procedures, water conservation techniques and policy, and City of Tampa permitting requirements. Training occurred in both the office classroom, and the field.
- During the inspection the inspector would:
 - Verify the ULV installation
 - Complete a customer survey
 - Complete an inspection checklist
 - Indelibly mark all toilet tanks with the reservation number and year of program participation.
 - Install up to one low flow showerhead per toilet replaced at the customer's request.
 - Put customers requesting toilet pick up on a pick up list to be picked up after the inspection.
- Customer installations failing an inspection were told what they needed to do to come into compliance. When completed, a follow up inspection was performed.
- Upon passing an inspection the paperwork was processed and the customer issued a rebate check.

3. Results

REBATE DATA

Total Rebates Processed	2179
Single Family Rebates Processed	1529
Single Family Units	1185
Multifamily Rebates Processed	650
Multifamily Units	508

Total Rebate Dollars Expended	\$174,576.98
Total Single Family Rebate Dollars Expended	\$142,076.98
Total Multifamily Rebate Dollars Expended	\$32,500.00

Average Single Family Rebate Per Toilet	\$92.92
Average Multifamily Rebate Per Toilet	\$50.00

Percentage Single Family Toilets	70%
Percentage Multifamily Toilets	30%
Percentage Single Family Rebate Dollars	81%
Percentage Multifamily Rebate Dollars	19%

WATER SAVINGS

The total number of toilets replaced was 2,179. Previous studies conducted by the City of Tampa Water Department have demonstrated a minimum of 45.9% reduction in water use per person per household per day for total flush volume or 6.1 gal/pers/day due to the installation of ULV's. The total overall household water savings is estimated to be 15 to 19%. (Ayres Associates and Stevens Institute of Technology study, Feb. 1993). The total savings for this project are estimated to be 15 to 19% reduction in total residential water use. The average household size is estimated to be 2.9 persons. Therefore, total water savings per day is calculated to be 29,878 gallons (i.e. 2.9 persons x 6.1 gallons x 1689 households). A more recent study performed for the City of Tampa (Ayres Associates study, Nov. 1994) showed an expected average savings of 38 gallons per day per household. Based on this study total water savings per day is calculated to be 64,182 gallons (i.e. 38 gallons x 1689 households).

WATER SAVINGS

The total number of toilets replaced was 2,179. The total number of living units where toilets were replaced was 1,689. A recent study performed for the City of Tampa (*Water Savings and Participant Satisfaction Realized: City of Tampa Toilet Rebate Program Evaluation*, Ayres Associates study, Nov. 1994) showed an average savings of 38 gallons per day per household. Based on this study total water savings per day is calculated to be 64,182 gallons (i.e. 38 gallons x 1689 households)

4. Program Observations

Beginning in mid November the Great Toilet Rebate program experienced a slow but steady start up period. Through the promotional efforts of The City of Tampa Water Department Volt VIEWtech, and several toilet installation companies, the number of interested customers increased consistently, until our intake leveled in February. Production has remained fairly constant since then with occasional spikes or lows depending on promotional activities.

The main complaint we received from customers referred to the complexity necessary to participate in a reservation program. The 2 step process along with the number of forms upset and confused many customers. Several customers refused to participate in the program due to the complexity.

Much of the information requested on the Homeowner's Permit Application and the Contractor Compliance Certification had been collected previously on preceding forms.

Many customers had already installed their new toilets prior to requesting a program application. It was difficult, and sometimes impossible, to get the plumber to complete the necessary Contractor Compliance form post installation.

The rebate level of \$50.00 for multifamily customers was often not enough to encourage participation in the program. The requirement that a licensed plumber must install all multifamily toilets added to the apartment owners lack of participation. Apartment owners are used to having their own maintenance staff perform what they consider to be routine toilet replacement. Plumbers would charge up to \$70 each for labor only to install toilets in apartment complexes. However, Florida law mandates all plumbing services in multifamily buildings be performed by a licensed plumber.

The need for substantial up front money, to finance the toilet replacement, meant that some complexes might need to put off replacement until funds could be budgeted often the next fiscal year.

5. Program Suggestions

It is strongly suggested that the program process be modified to decrease the level of complexity apparent to the customer. As rebate funds seem to be available into the future, the easiest way to decrease complexity would be to drop the requirement for the rebate reservation. The program would then be run on a first come first serve basis. Customers would only need to submit a program application with their original receipt to comply with program rules.

Another useful task would be to review all forms and eliminate duplication of information requested. Combined with the simplification of the program process, the customer could receive all necessary information, and the application, on one page. These suggestions have been implemented by the City for FY95 funds.

We have never received the applications from the multifamily sector that were originally anticipated. As the multifamily sector was to be the major focus (65% of the program goal) of the rebate program it would be useful to explore the possibility of introducing program modifications to encourage participation

The biggest block to multifamily involvement is the rebate level. Any increase in rebate levels should go a long way towards encouraging the building owner's participation. The second obstacle to multifamily rebates is the fact that state law requires that non-owner occupied units have all installations performed by a licensed contractor. Unfortunately, the City cannot wave this requirement.

After the City of Tampa Water Department has completed any program changes, and printed new program materials, we would suggest a marketing campaign geared towards the multifamily sector. Volt VIEWtech is ready to work with the City of Tampa Water Department to design a marketing package, which might include a cover letter (possibly under the Mayor's signature), encouraging multifamily owners to participate in the rebate program. The multifamily marketing package might also include testimonials from the several multifamily owners who have participated and seen a substantial water use reduction.

The City of Tampa Water Department could generate a listing of their high water use multifamily customers and send the marketing package to these customers. A follow up calling campaign, and strategic personal contacts, might help to increase the participation of multifamily owners in the rebate program