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Building Codes Division takes action to support water conservation

Salem -- The Department of Consumer and Business Services' Building Codes Division (BCD) has taken the first of many steps to make it easier for Oregonians to conserve water.

After input from the plumbing industry, the division approved two new methods that allow homeowners to harvest rainwater and reuse wastewater. The first method involves reusing certain wastewater in homes when the owner installs water conservation systems. The water conservation systems treat water drained from bathtubs, showers, bathroom sinks, washing machines, and laundry tubs, and then store the water for use in flushing toilets. The second method gives both homes and commercial buildings the ability to collect rainwater from roofs to be used for gardens, flushing toilets, washing clothes, and in heating and air conditioning units.

Oregon joins a small group of states, including California, Washington, Ohio, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, and Hawaii, that are working toward allowing builders and homeowners to install wastewater conservation systems.

The approval of these methods applies in every Oregon city and county because Oregon has a statewide building codes system.

"With these two rulings, Oregon is making a large contribution to the advancement of a sustainable environment for its citizens," said Ken Carlson, Oregon Plumbing Board chairman.

The Building Codes Division took this action as part of the Governor's agenda for climate change. Earlier this year, the division worked with the Oregon Department of Energy to upgrade the energy code provisions of the 2008 Oregon Residential Specialty Code, adding new energy-efficiency provisions.

Approving the new water conservation methods is one of the first projects taken on by the division's new Green Building Services section. The section will be the centralized point of contact for green building within the state and will work with local governments, business groups, and the various programs within the division (plumbing, electrical, structural, boiler, etc.) to develop standards and streamline processes to position Oregon as a center for innovation within the green building community.

"These statewide rulings are among the first steps of many planned actions the division is looking at to promote green building practices and conservation of scarce resources," said Andrea Simmons, manager of the Green Building Services section.

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The Building Codes Division, part of the Department of Consumer and Business Services, provides building code development, administration, inspection, plan review, licensing, and permit services to the construction industry to help ensure the safe and effective construction of structures in Oregon. For more information, visit www.bcd.oregon.gov.

The Department of Consumer and Business Services is Oregon's largest business regulatory and consumer protection agency. For more information, visit www.dcbs.oregon.gov.