

Ask Jon Eakes

WaterWatch -- checking how much water you use to clean your car

Last Updated: Thursday, September 20th, 2012, Created: Friday, February 6th, 2004

Sometimes water conservation can be helped a bit simply by knowing how much water we use -- awareness. Water Watch is a little water meter, one for the garden hose and another for the shower head, that measures in either litres or gallons. In my household it has already cut down on the water wasted in taking showers. So now that I had an inexpensive water meter, I could finally seek out the answer to a question that has long nagged me: does it take more water to wash a car by hand or with a pressure washer? Peter from the Downtown Gas & Auto Centre in Toronto, Ontario agreed to help us test both methods. We took the HGTV very dirty van into his garage and asked him to wash half with a mitt and a hose and the other half with his pressure washer. (Actually it was just a sneaky way to get a clean van.) I installed the Water Watch between the faucet and the hose and Peter went to work - wet it down, wash it and rinse it off. 50 litres by hand -- only 25 litres with the pressure washer. We were both surprised. That thin powerful spray uses more power and less water to get the same job done -- half as much water! That doesn't even count the extra water you would waste if you just let the hose run on the ground, as we so often do.

Keywords:

Conservation, Power Tools, Cleaning, Environmental, Ecology, Water

Article 1987

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