

PRESS RELEASE

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SMART DESIGN: Before Woolworths opens a new store, office or distribution centre it looks at the design of the property to make sure it uses water – and energy – efficiently.

Woolworths values blue gold

UTILITIES govern global everyday existence, from business to private lives, and without certain key services, modern life as we know it would collapse.

Water and electricity dominate utility usage and both are scarce resources leading South African retailer, Woolworths, keeps high on the agenda in doing business.

During National Water Week which ends on March 22, Woolworths is showcasing its efforts to save water across its nationwide stores and head office.

Woolworths began its water resource management journey by engaging experts to measure how much water it uses. Since then, the retailer has changed the way it approaches real estate across the continent.

Before Woolworths opens a new store, office or distribution centre it looks at the design of the property to make sure it uses water efficiently. Its stores now include features such as water-saving air-conditioning, kitchens and rest-room facilities. Selected properties collect rainwater. Others recycle it.

It has also installed water pulse metres at 360 stores nationwide for the real-time, online monitoring of water consumption. This innovative approach has helped Woolworths save hundreds of thousands of Rands.

It has also helped municipalities detect hard to find water leakages, which, President Jacob Zuma noted in his recent state of the nation address, costs the South African economy dearly each year.

Woolworths now works with property developers and landlords across the continent, to repair leaks and improve water billing. By the end of 2015, these measures will see relative water use in Woolworths stores cut in half, from a 2007 benchmark.

Woolworths has been able to make these consumption breakthroughs largely because of innovative technology that combines information technology (IT) and engineering.

Aside from allowing the company to pick up underground leaks and ensuring that they are billed correctly for water by landlords, centre management and municipalities, this is also a leading example of the use of technology to protect and manage resources.

IN-STORE TECHNOLOGY

All new Woolworths real estate opportunities – and its existing stores – are designed for efficient use of water and waste water and includes the installation of the water pulse metres.

Each store manager can view the water and electricity consumption particulars of their store, reviewing was far back as from when the metre was installed. They can then compare and contrast usage against cost on the municipal billing function, allowing them to pick up any irregularities. The high-tech innovation has resulted in the documentation of substantial eye-opening data regarding usage.

The metres have been adapted to meet Woolworths' needs, including updated software. Predominantly the innovation has happened at store level. The IT installed is linked to the store's local intranet and has been tweaked over the years to remain dynamic and responsive.

The outcomes have been significant, placing Woolworths in a leading role in the retail sector's resource efficiency advances. Initially Woolworths focused on energy and power, but the move to incorporate water widens the sustainability scope and impact.

The move to sophisticated water monitoring, revealed a surprising amount of water lost through an extensive matrix of leaks, hidden from view, beneath its stores. At one store in Cape Town, Woolworths discovered leaks, which resulted in the loss of 2.5-millions of litres of water a month – that's as much as an Olympic size swimming pool of municipal water lost a month.

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SAVING AT 'HOME'

Woolworths is committed to showcasing its energy and water saving advances by ensuring that its head office is as resource savvy as possible.

Woolworths head office campus in Cape Town taps into an underground water supply. After consulting with the municipality and a range of experts, the company realised that it could harvest the underground water, treat it and use it.

This water is used for the building's bathroom facilities, kitchens, car wash, courtyard fountain and cooling towers. This way, the office campus has saved 28.5-million litres, in municipal water, since 2012. The aim is a 70% relative reduction in municipal water use by 2015.

Woolworths has also instituted an in-store staff training programme to create awareness and drive action among its employees.

ENDS.

(715 words).

Note to the editor

Woolworths' water saving efforts form part of its 'Good Business Journey', a committed approach to the triple bottom-line of sustainability and is a comprehensive plan to make a difference in six key areas: Energy, water, waste, sustainable farming, sustainable fishing, transformation, and social development.

Issued on behalf of:

Issued by:

Woolworths

Amy Shelper

Meropa Communications

0718804831

amys@meropa.co.za

For Woolworths:

Justin Smith