CARING FOR CREATION NEWS
The Hot Water Blues

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You really should be thinking about these things before the inevitable happens. Of course it will be at the most inconvenient time; probably just before you're ready to leave town. Yes, someday you'll walk down to the basement and find water on the floor. You guessed it, the hot water heater failed---caput, broken, dead! At this point it's too late for research. You're going to desperately call a plumber and s/he is going to give you another one just like the old one.

There are other options; an on-demand water heater is one of them. Although gaining popularity in the U.S., they are still unfamiliar to many people. Think about one now, before you have to; it's a lot easier to sort through the options when the pressure is off. Our own Ed VanDam has installed one of these units in his home. Here's what he has to say about it:

Water heating accounts for 20% or more of an average household's annual energy expenditures. The yearly operating cost for a conventional gas or electric storage tank water heater averages $200 to $450 depending on usage, family size, etc. Demand water heaters provide hot water only as it is needed. They do not have a large storage tank of hot water like traditional hot water heater systems. Even if no hot water is drawn from this traditional tank there is "standby loss" because the large tank has heat loss. Periodically, the tank fires up to reheat the water to the desired temperature. Demand water heaters do not do this and therefore they are about 10-20% more efficient, again depending on types of usage and quantities. Demand water heaters are common in Japan and Europe and they are beginning to be more common in the United States.

We installed a gas on-demand system when we remodeled our house about four years ago. Thus far it has performed well for our family of two and we have no complaints. I have not tracked our energy bills that carefully but I believe they are less than in our cottage which is a smaller place but has a traditional water heater. Research seems to indicate that the current payback for the increased cost of a demand system compared to a traditional system is about 5-7 years.

Two references that can be studied: www.eere.energy.gov & www.toolbase.org

An on-demand water heater could be one of the ways by which you lighten your ecological footprint. Less energy consumed means less carbon going into the atmosphere. Reducing carbon lessens the potential for global climate change. It's up to you, but don't wait for a crisis.

Peter Boogaart: Caring for Creation Coordinator