

GREEN BUILDING: How green is your plumber and your plumbing system?

By Miranda Wildman Efird
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A green plumber operates much the same as any other plumber, with an emphasis on water conservation and overall reduction of environmental footprints.

A plumber who claims to be green should adhere to practices that any other green business would, such as paper waste reduction and recycling, the use of earth-friendly cleaning products and sustainable office supplies, driving hybrid or biofuel-powered company cars and offsetting carbon emissions.

In addition to these regular green practices, a green plumber should use low VOC (volatile organic compound) glues and cleaners and offer alternatives to PVC pipe. PVC is harmful to the environment because it releases poisonous chemicals throughout the lifetime of the plastic. Copper and cast-iron pipe can be recycled, and although these are more expensive materials than PVC, they are a better choice for the environment and for the health of your home or business.

The cost of labor for a green plumber should not depend on the materials used. The eco-friendly materials are installed in the same manner as conventional materials. Green materials can easily be incorporated into homes or businesses, whether it's new construction or a remodel.

Some other examples of green plumbing practices are the installation of on-demand water heaters, which are smaller than conventional water heaters and powered by gas. They take up less room and have a continuous supply of hot water. An on-demand water heater can save 30-40 percent on energy costs, and there are tax credits available for people who have them installed in their homes.

Rainwater harvesting systems, grey water systems and the installation of water-saving devices in toilets and low-flow plumbing fixtures are other ways your plumber can help you save money, energy and water. For example if you have an older showerhead, you could be wasting 6.4 gallons per minute.

Incorporating green building practices into the plumbing trade will improve quality of air, water and living, so call your plumber today to ask about how you can improve your plumbing system.

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