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# In The News

**Multifamily Executive**
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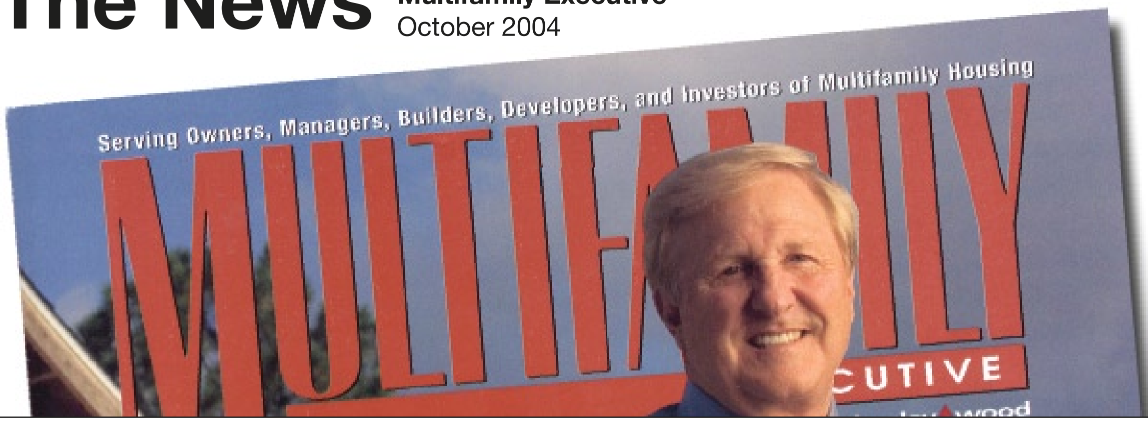
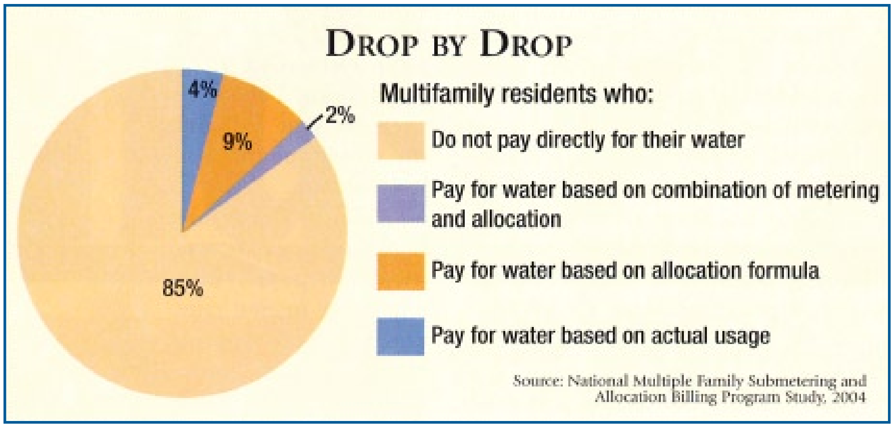





## Down the Drain

### Report Recommends New Fixtures and Submetering




Drip. Drip. Drip. That's the sound of water—and dollars—leaking from multifamily properties, according to a long-awaited submetering report released in September.

The study, produced by the Environmental Protection Agency in cooperation with municipal water utilities and two national apartment groups, says that multifamily owners could reduce their residents' water usage by 15 percent by billing them directly.

And it would certainly give multifamily owners a boost. According to Wade Smith, CEO of Wellspring International, a submetering firm with offices in San Diego, Ca., and Bristol, Pa., apartment property owners pay $300 to $500 per unit, each year, for water and sewer—costs that could be recovered through submetering or utility allocation programs.

Just don't expect to save water through utility allocation programs, commonly known as RUBS. Because costs are shared equally by residents, there is less incentive to turn off that faucet or take a shorter shower than there is under submetering programs.

The best strategy of all: Invest in water-saving fixtures. The report found that apartments before 1995 used more than 10.8 kgallons per unit than apartments built after 1995, a savings that should be credited to the now-mandated low-floor toilets and other similar products, says Eileen Lee, vice president of the environment at NMHC.

She encourages utilities who are concerned about water usage to offer a change-out program, where people could trade older fixtures (like toilets) for new ones. "These buildings have a long lifetime, and historically, there has been no regulation to keep property owners adopting the latest technology," Lee says. "If the owners have the incentive to put them in there, they will."

*—Alison Rice*