

Leak Diagnosis Guidance

Watch for signs of motion on your water meter to confirm that you have a leak. The first step is to make sure all water fixtures in the home are off. Look at the meter. If there is no movement on the meter, there is no leak. If there is movement on the meter, shut off the water supply valve to your home (this is commonly located on side of house below the hose bib). Again, look at the water meter. If the triangle flow indicator is rotating or if your home is equipped with an electronic meter check and the last 2 digits are advancing there is a leak between the meter and the home. If the meter stopped, the leak is inside the home.

- All homes are equipped with water meters designed to simplify billing and help homeowners keep track of how much water they're using on a regular basis. Your water meter is in a protective "box" near the curb or sidewalk in front of your home. The black box is potable water and the purple is irrigation.
- Minor leaks may not create enough lost water to show up on your water meter right away. To be sure, wait 1-2 hours after your initial reading (while not using any water in the home) and take a second one. If the second reading differs from the first, there is a leak.

If you have discovered the leak is located inside the home check the following:

1. Once you've determined that you have a leak, it's time to locate it. Check your hot water heater, look for drips or pooling in the area. Look for leaks around the pressure relief and drain valves at the top and bottom of your water heater, respectively.
- Listen closely for dripping, gurgling, or hissing sounds, as well. It's possible that your leak hasn't yet manifested visibly on the outside of the water heater, but it may still be detectable audibly. If you feel the issue is with the hot water heater contact a plumber.

Examine each of the toilets in your home. Add a few drops of dark food coloring to the toilet's upper tank, then wait half an hour or so without flushing the toilet. Look to see if the dye has made its way into the bowl. If it has, the problem is most likely a worn-out flapper valve. However, improperly adjusted flush handle linkage or a failed flush valve may also be the culprit. Your next step is to identify which component is to blame and pick up a replacement at your local hardware store or contact a plumber.

- Most toilet leaks originate at the flapper valve, which is the rubber seal that moves up and down when you flush the toilet. You'll often hear the water running intermittently or continuously if the flapper valve isn't sealing properly.
- If you think the flush handle might be the problem, try tightening the nut securing it to the side of the tank or adjusting the length of the chain so that it's neither too tight nor loose. If neither of these solutions work, you may need to replace the handle or the flush valve altogether or contact a plumber.

If you think the leak is located outside the home check the following:

Inspect your home's exterior hose bibs. The bibs are the faucet-like valves on the side of your home that you use to hook up a watering hose. These may be actively dripping, or they may hiss or vibrate faintly as water passes through. Often, you can stop a leaky bib by tightening the packing nut that secures the handle or replacing a worn-out washer inside the handle assembly. If neither of these solutions work, call a plumber.

- The average home has 1-2 hose bibs on either the sides or the front and back, but particularly large homes may have more, so be sure to conduct a thorough search.
- A leak doesn't need to be a bubbling geyser to be a cause for alarm—even a slight, consistent drip could point to a problematic rupture somewhere in the supply lines.
- A good way to catch leaks that aren't steadily flowing is to note when a fixture or the surrounding terrain appears to be wet despite a lack of recent rainfall or irrigation.

Your usage is high this month? Have You?

- Pressure washed
- Filled a pool (or had a pool service company perform same)
- Hosted guests
- Washed vehicles
- Washed extra laundry
- Used hose on side of house (potable water)
- Left Hose running
- Checked toilets
- Considered any new water consuming equipment (e.g., pool equipment, water treatment equipment)

Water Wasting Habits

Often, a substantial water bill can be the result of overconsumption behaviors affiliated with appliances and home utilities. Some of these behaviors include:

- Using top-loading laundry machines, which consume as much as 200% more water than modern, front-loading laundry machines.
- Using washing machines for half or quarter-loads, as opposed to waiting for full laundry loads.
- Overwatering lawns and unmediated use of water-consuming recreational toys and equipment.
- Lengthy and unnecessary shower times. Keeping showers under five minutes can result in up to 1,000 gallons of water savings every month.
- Running water to thaw meats and frozen foods, as opposed to planned/proper thawing techniques.
- Washing dishes by hand. Running water while washing a load of dishes consumes 4-5 times more water than a dishwasher.
- Keeping water running while brushing teeth or shaving, which is an unnecessarily wasteful.
- By limiting water wasting behaviors, you can significantly lower your water bill and improve resource efficiency.