

Water Division

Do I have a water leak?

If you happen to receive a water bill from the town that is much higher than normal and you cannot figure out why, it is possible that you have a leak somewhere in your house. This article will help you check for a leak and to give you some options to try and find it.

All the water that you are billed for flows through your water meter. This is a relatively small device usually located in the basement or lowest level of your home where the service pipe from the street comes through your foundation wall.. The meter tracks the flow of water through it and it gets read by water division personnel twice a year. If you received a bill that seems much higher than usual the first thing you should do is check the meter. Turn off all faucets, hoses, dishwashers, washing machines and any other water device in your home. Next, go down to your water meter and look at the dial-which, in most cases, looks like a black arrow. If this arrow is spinning, even a little bit, it means that you have a leak somewhere in your house. If it is not spinning check the numbers on the top of the meter just before you go to bed. Then re-check the numbers in the morning. If the numbers are the same then you have no leak. If there is an increase in the numbers this means that water has been flowing through the meter overnight. It is most likely a toilet or an outside spigot that is causing the increase in water usage. If it was a faucet then you would notice a drip or more consistent water coming from the faucet when the handles were turned off.

To find a leak in your outside spigot, simply go out side and locate the spigot. Most houses have 1 or 2 of them. Check the spigot and the ground underneath it for moisture. If you find a drip or a wet spot turn the handle to the right to make sure the spigot is completely off. If there is no sign of moisture or dripping water the chances are your leak is in your toilet. If you do find a drip or wet ground below the spigot and the handle is completely turned off, you may have a bad handle. In many cases there is an additional shut off valve for the outside spigot located just inside the house where the spigot pipe goes out through the wall. Turning this valve to the right should stop the leak at the spigot. Either way you should call a plumber to repair the spigot.

Sometimes the leaks in your toilet are difficult to notice. The toilet tank is automatically filled by a control valve inside the tank. Your toilet may not run constantly, which would be an obvious sign of a leak. The toilet may "surge" from time to time and this happens when the water slowly leaks out of the tank into the bowl without being detected. To check if your toilet is leaking, open the tank cover and put some food coloring in the tank, not the bowl. Put the cover back on the tank and do not use the toilet for a couple hours. Go back and check the toilet bowl to see if there is any of the food coloring in the bowl. If you see food coloring in the bowl or no food coloring in the tank that means you have a slow leak in your toilet. At this point you should call a plumber to check your toilet and tell him what you did.

There are other reasons for higher than usual water bills. If you water your lawn consistently in the summer from your hose or portable sprinkler, this will cause an increase in your usage. Do you wash your vehicle every week at your house? Are you or someone else taking longer showers? Are you washing dishes in the sink instead of using a dishwasher? All of these will cause your usage to go up and your bill to be higher.

Remember, every drop of water that flows through the meter gets tracked and you will be responsible to pay for that usage. Even a small occasional drip will add up significantly over the 6 month billing period. It is wise to have these small drips repaired.