

Did you receive a



high water bill?

There are some things you can do. First, calm down. Then read this.

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Let's start by comparing the reading on your bill to the reading on your water meter. Your water meter should register about the same reading or slightly higher than the billed reading. This tells you whether you were billed accurately. If the meter sees usage every hour for 24 consecutive hours, this means you could have a leak. You will notice in the display an image that looks like a dripping faucet.

If there is no indication that there is a leak you will have to consider what occurred over the past month. Take a minute to really think about it. Check the read dates on your bill and consider... Did you have any visitors? Did your child come home from school? Have you been watering the lawn, garden, flowers or plants? Are you absolutely sure when the automatic sprinkler system goes on and off? Have the little ones been playing with the garden hose to cool off in the summer? Maybe someone flushed a "tricky" toilet and it was unknowingly allowed to run for an extended period of time. (BTW -If you have a "tricky" toilet, you have leaking toilet and you need to fix it. Fast.)

If you really can't explain a sudden increase on your bill it probably means that you have a leak. 90% of high water bills are the result of an unnoticed or unknown leak. At this point you will want to do a walk through of your home and thoroughly check.

Here's how:

- ✓ Start with the obvious - the toilets. Even the ones that you don't use very often. 9 times out of 10 leaky toilets are found to be the cause of a high bill. **Just because you don't hear a toilet running does not mean it's not leaking.** Get some FREE toilet test dye strips from the Water Dept. Or, you can achieve the same result with food coloring. Put enough food coloring to change the color of the water, or a test dye strip, in the tank of the toilet. Wait 20 minutes without flushing. If any color bleeds into the bowl, you have a leak. And leaks cost money.

Most of the time worn out parts are causing the problem, and can be fixed with little effort or expense. There are do-it-yourself websites that can help you with minor toilet repairs if you aren't able or don't know someone who is handy.

- ✓ Check all hose bibs (threaded faucets that can receive a hose) - under sinks, in the basement along the copper pipes, outside or at a utility sink.
- ✓ Check all of the faucets and showerheads. Any drip, any leak - no matter how small you think it is - is a problem and needs repaired. Remember, be diligent.

Do you have a spigot in your garage? Is there water access other places on the property aside from the house? Check the outside spigots. Make sure they are shut off tight. Feel around. Are they wet even though you haven't used them in awhile?

- ✓ Check the floor for puddles around the hot water tank. Check the pressure relief valve if you can. This is plumbed into the drain so you will have to look to see if there is a leak. Refer to your owner's manual. Unless you know what you are doing, you may need to call in a professional for these types of repairs.
- ✓ Do you have a humidifier on your heating system? Do you have a reverse osmosis system? These are notorious for leaking. You will want to refer to the owner's manuals for these, too. The problem is that that they are designed to contain the water. So, if there is a leak, you may not know it until you get your bill. Leaks don't always spill out onto the floor. If your usage goes up in the winter months when water usage is typically lower, then you probably should have your heating system checked.
- ✓ Lawn sprinklers will cause your water bill to go up. Most people who have irrigation systems feel that the benefits outweigh the cost and are prepared for the higher bills in the summer. However, if you have one, check it periodically to make sure that it is operating as efficiently as it should be. There are systems that are designed to use as little water as possible and still maintain excellent results. Companies are now offering products that connect the system directly to a wireless device so that you aren't watering the lawn while it's raining or when the lawn doesn't need it.

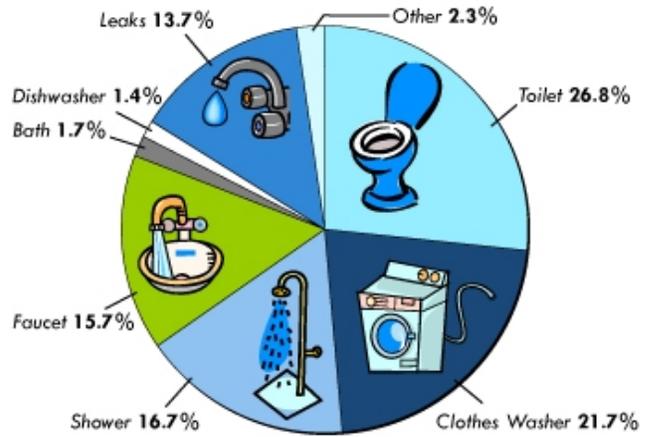
Water meters are always located inside (unless in a pit) because they have water running through them and would freeze and break otherwise. This is good for you because you can read your water meter. We bill in increments of 100 gallons and the meter reads like the odometer in your car. It's that easy. You can track readings or your usage. Water is the only utility where an unnoticed leak could cause an unexpected high bill!

If you think you are paying too much for your water bill, you can change it. The Water Department has literature on ways you can save water and save money.

A continuous leak from a hole this size would, over a three month period, waste water in the amount shown below.

Streams Diameter at 50 psi		Gallons	Daily Average
Inches	MM		
1/4"	6.5	1,181,000	13,122
3/16"	4.8	652,000	7,244
1/8"	3.2	296,000	3,288
1/16"	1.6	74,000	822

Indoor Household Water Use



Source: Awwa Research Foundation (1999)