

How to check for a water leak



Finding water leaks can save you water, which means saving money on your water & sewer bills. Follow these steps to determine if you have a leak in your home or a sprinkler irrigation system.

Step 1. Turn off all water-using appliances inside and outside the house so that no water is being used. This includes showers, sinks, washing machines, flushing of toilets, etc. If you have an automatic sprinkler irrigation system, turn off the controller.

Step 2. Locate your meter. Your meter is located near where your service line comes through the foundation usually in your home's basement. If you can't find it, please call our office for assistance.

Your meter head dial is read similar to a car odometer. The meter measures water in cubic feet (for residential customers). Most meter heads have a **triangular red disc commonly called a "leak indicator"**:

- If the "leak indicator" is spinning, you have a leak.
- If there is no indicator and the actual meter head "dial hand" is moving, water is running somewhere in your system and you have a leak. If the dial hand is not moving, note the position of the hand and wait 10 minutes. Check the meter hand again, if it has moved, you have a slow leak.
- You can also try doing an over-night reading. Before you go to bed write down the reading on your meter head. Make sure no water is being used during the night (including flushing of toilets). When you wake up in the morning check the reading on your meter to see if there is any change. If so, you have a leak.

(If you are unsure or are unable to fix a leak yourself, it might be time to call a plumber.)

- Running or Leaking Toilets: If your toilet is running constantly, you could be wasting 200 gallons of water or more every day. When a toilet runs, it means the water is flowing into the tank or bowl and not stopping. ***It is a good idea to test annually for silent leaks using food coloring or dye strips (provided by request from our office). Simply add a few drops of food coloring (or a dye strip) to the water in the tank. Wait 15-30 minutes. If the water in the toilet bowl changes colors, you know you have a leak and you probably need to replace the flapper valve.***

If the toilet runs and never stops:

- Check the mounting nut for the handle on the side of the tank. It may be sticking and not letting the handle get back in the right place when it's let go. If so, simply clean it.
- Check the chain to make sure it doesn't have too much slack where it can get caught under the flapper causing water to leak down the toilet/or check that the chain has enough slack where it can allow the flapper to close all the way. Also check the chain to make sure it isn't broken. Sometimes the chain gets corroded or weakened over time. Replace the chain with a new one so it hangs straight with about ½" in slack.
- If you don't have a chain in your tank, check to make sure your lift-wire isn't bent.
- Check the flapper (The rubber flapper that covers the hole in the bottom of the tank). Make sure the flapper is covering the hole all the way. If the float never reaches proper height and water continuously enters the tank and the bowl, reposition the flapper over the hole and flush again. Watch to see if the flapper covers the hole or if it becomes askew again. If it appears askew then the flapper's rubber has become deformed or worn or the chain connected to the valve is damaged or caught. A deformed flapper or damaged chain needs to be replaced.
- Check the position of the float. If the float is stuck above the overflow tube, then the water never reaches a height that tells the fill valve to shut off. The float needs to be adjusted so that the arm sits lower in the water. Check the float manually to see if it is cracked and filling with water. A broken float needs to be replaced.

If the toilet runs and stops intermittently:

- It is possible a leaky flapper valve is slowly letting water flow into the tank. The water fills

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up after a flush and a small hole leaks the water into the bowl. It isn't fast enough to keep the float from shutting off the fill valve, but once it shuts off the water will slowly drain causing the fill valve to restart.

Over time, the rubber on the flapper becomes worn and creates these small leaks and the flapper needs to be replaced.

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