

WATER TOPICS IN OUR COMMUNITY: THE FACTS ABOUT LEAKS

CAN LEAKS REALLY WASTE A LOT OF WATER?

Leaks in your home or business can be costly for you and for our community's water supply. If you notice a sudden increase in your water bill, check the usage chart on the invoice. If it's gone way up without good reason, you may have a leak. Hidden leaks can occur at any time and waste a huge amount of water while increasing your bill and potentially damaging property.

The average family uses about 6,000 gallons of water per month in the winter. Here are a few examples of how that usage can spike when there's a leak:

- A 20-gallons-per-minute leak from a deep, front-yard water line went undetected, losing over 800,000 gallons per month until it was flagged during a billing review by TMWA.
- Another leak occurred under a backyard deck, where it wasted 300,000 per month until clues about the leak became apparent.
- Indoor leaks add up too. One customer lost 144,000 gallons of water within one billing cycle from just one leaky toilet, resulting in over \$350 in unnecessary water charges.

IDENTIFYING LEAKS BY CHECKING YOUR METER

While we do alert customers if we notice extraordinarily high water use, a simple check of your meter can help you determine, on your own, if you have a leak. Here's what you do:

1. First, find your meter. In most newer homes it is located in the sidewalk in front of the house.
2. Remove the meter box cover. Note: some have a "flip lid" in the center. If so, open this instead of removing the entire cover. If you must remove the entire cover, lift carefully to avoid injury or damage to the meter.
3. Verify the meter number to ensure you are checking service for your residence. The meter number on your billing statement should match the one stamped on the meter.
4. Locate the dial on the meter face. This monitors water use in thousands of gallons. If the flow indicator or needle moves while all water devices inside and outside the home are shut off, water is still flowing through the meter, indicating you have a leak.
5. When you are finished, close the meter cap to prevent damage to the lens. Replace the meter box lid, taking care not to damage the meter or lid.

WHY DOES TMWA FOCUS ON TOILET LEAKS?

Running toilets account for the vast majority of leaks found inside the home. While many people with toilet leaks don't even realize they have a problem, it is estimated that about 20% of all toilets leak slightly. A toilet leaking one gallon every five minutes will cause the usage to jump by more than 8,500 gallons in a month—and you may never hear the water running.



HOW DO I CHECK MY TOILET FOR LEAKS?

To check for a leak, put a little food coloring in your toilet tank. If, without flushing, the coloring begins to appear in the bowl, you have a leak. To fix the leak, try replacing the flapper gasket, adjusting or replacing the flush valve, or call a plumber. To see a video on how to test your toilet for leaks, visit www.tmwa.com/howto.

QUICK FACTS

Drip, drip, drip...

A slow leak or drip (two drips per minute) from your hose, faucet or toilet, can waste:

- .28 gallons per day
- 8.65 gallons per month
- 105.30 gallons per year

Periodically:

Check all faucets for drips. Replace any worn and leaking washers, gaskets, pipes or defective fixtures. Also, check for leaks on outside faucets.

Did you know?

Flushing a toilet can use up to seven gallons of water. Installing a low-flow toilet, which uses only 1.6 gallons per flush, can save up to five gallons per flush.

Wow!

The highest toilet leak documented by TMWA is 240,000 gallons in one month—that's enough water to fill 75 construction water trucks, or more than 2.5 construction water trucks every day!

To learn more about workshops addressing this topic, visit:

www.tmwa.com/calendar

For more information on repairing leaks visit:

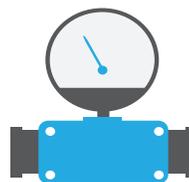
www.tmwa.com/conservation/leaks

HOW DO I FIND A HIDDEN LEAK?

If your water meter's dial is moving, yet all your water faucets are turned off, you probably have a hidden leak. If you suspect this is so, follow these tips to find it. First, make sure no water is being used inside or outside of your home. Then locating the leak is a simple process of elimination.

CHECK YOUR TOILETS:

1. Shut off one toilet at a time at the wall. The shut-off valve is usually located on or near the wall behind the toilet bowl.
2. In between each shut off, go out to the water meter and check your flow indicator.
3. If the small, red flow indicator is moving, that toilet is not the problem. Something else is causing the leak.
4. If the flow indicator stopped moving, that means the toilet shut off is the culprit.



CHECK YOUR SPRINKLER SYSTEM:

1. Shut off the anti-siphon valve that serves your sprinkler system.
2. Check the red flow indicator at the water meter.
3. If the flow indicator stopped moving, the sprinkler system is the problem.

CHECK YOUR MAIN SERVICE LINE:

1. First, find your water shutoff valve. (Check your front yard near the sewer riser cap, in your garage or near your water softener unit.)
2. Shut off the valve, cutting off all water to your home, then go in the house and turn on a faucet to make sure the water is off.
3. Check the red flow indicator at the meter. If it is moving, the leak is between the shut-off valve and the water meter

LEAKS CHECKED, NOW WHAT?

First, close the water meter cap to prevent damage to the lens and replace the meter box lid. If you are not able to find the and repair the leak, you should call a professional plumber to locate and fix the problem. If you find a simple leak like your toilet flapper or kitchen faucet, you may want to fix it yourself. TMWA'S helpful do-it-yourself videos may help: www.tmwa.com/how-to.

ALWAYS BE ALERT FOR HIDDEN LEAKS:

While TMWA is committed to alerting customers if we think they may have a leak, we have no way of knowing how water is being used on a property—we only know if the amount being used is unusually high. That's why you should always pay attention to your water bill and how much water you're using.

About TMWA:

Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA) is a not-for-profit water utility, overseen by elected officials from Reno, Sparks and Washoe County. TMWA employs a highly skilled team who ensure the treatment, delivery and availability of high-quality drinking water around the clock for more than 425,000 residents of the Truckee Meadows.

About this series:

"Water Topics in Our Community" is a series of papers designed to provide our customers information about key water topics in this region.

To access all of the papers, go to www.tmwa.com/topics.

About TMWA's Board of Directors:

The TMWA Board welcomes you to attend and comment at any board meeting. Meeting schedules are posted at

www.tmwa.com/meetings.

To send a question to the Board, visit us online at

www.tmwa.com/comment.

Questions or feedback?

We'd like to hear from you. Please call our Community Communications line with any remaining questions you have on this topic or other water topics. The number is

(775) 834-8290.

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Revision date: 9/29/20