



Potential Causes of High Water Bills

An unusually high water bill is most often caused by a leak or change in water use. Some common causes of high water bills include:

- A leaking toilet or a toilet that continues to run after being flushed.
- A dripping faucet
- Filling or topping off a swimming pool
- Watering the lawn, new grass or trees-also check for an open hose bibb
- Kids home for summer vacations or school holidays, guests
- Water-cooled air conditioners
- A broken water pipe or obvious leak. Check pipes in the basement or crawlspace-the water heater could also be leaking
- Water softener problems – cycles continuously
- Running the water to avoid freezing water pipes during cold weather

Generally, water consumption is higher during the summer due to watering of lawns, pools, and gardening.

Changes in your water use

Did you have house guests, water your lawn more than usual, or do anything else out of the ordinary in the last three months that uses a lot of water.

Check for leaks

Leaks, whether unseen or unfixed, can waste hundreds and even thousands of gallons of water. It is important to routinely check your plumbing and home for leaky faucets, toilets, and outside taps and irrigation lines.

Toilet and faucet leaks

The most common cause for a high water is a toilet leak, so it is important to fix leaks as they occur. Some leaks are easy to find, such as a dripping faucet or running toilet. You can usually hear a running toilet, but not always.

Do-It-Yourself Toilet Assessment

First check for the most common leak: a deteriorated or defective flush valve (flapper) ball at the bottom of the toilet tank. If it does not make a tight seal water will leak into the toilet bowl. To check for this:

- Take the lid off of the tank behind the bowl, flush the toilet, then wait for it to fully refill.
- Put a few drops of dark food coloring in the tank
- Wait at least 20 minutes or longer if you suspect a small leak
- If any color appears in the toilet bowl, there is a leak

The second most common type of leak has to do with an improperly adjusted or broken fill (ballcock) valve. To check for this take the lid off of the toilet tank, flush, and see if water is draining into the overflow tubes when the tank is full.

Irrigation Systems

During the summer irrigation systems are a common source of high water use. Watering times generally double during the summer months compared to the winter. Automated irrigation systems should be checked regularly to be sure they are functioning properly and have no leaks or broken sprinkler heads. If a sprinkler valve sticks on it could waste an extremely large quantity of water. The irrigation timer may not be programmed properly-sprinklers are watering too often and/or for too long. Reprogramming may be necessary if the power has been off.

Water Softeners

Customers with water softeners have higher water bills due to the regeneration or backwash cycles their systems go through. The systems are preset to regenerate or backwash on a regular basis. The systems will use water to clean the filter media and discharge the wastewater. There are times when these systems will get stuck in a cycle which will cause higher water usage. If you have recently had your softener serviced or replaced make sure you know how often it has been set to cycle. Any increase in the times it is set to cycle will increase your water consumption.

Who is responsible?

Should you receive a bill you feel is too high, check over the causes previously outlined. This may help to pinpoint the source of the increased consumption. You may need to contact a plumber or other professional to help determine the source of a leak. Property owners are responsible for all private service water lines from the public main to the residence and for leaks inside the home.