

Has your water bill increased?

Every billing quarter the Town Office staff answers numerous calls concerning increased water usage. Sometimes these increases are the result of a known water leak experienced during the previous billing quarter. Sometimes the increases are due to an error made in reading the water meter. Usually, the readings are accurate and the complainant does not know why they have experienced an increase in water usage.

Is it your water meter's fault?

It is important to note that residential water meters do not read more water than what passes through them. The common problems found with residential water meters are they do not read all the water passing through them or they stop reading all together.

Do you have a leak?

You may decide to contact a local plumber and have them perform a full inspection of your plumbing, however there are a few things you can do yourself. First, check your inside and outside faucets for leaks. Make sure they are turned completely off with no drips evident. A dripping faucet can waste more than 3,000 gallons of water a year. Second, check for leaky pipes under the house or basement. These leaks are usually quite obvious. Next, inspect your yard for wet areas that would normally be dry. An unusual wet area may indicate a broken water line buried in the ground. Finally, check your

toilets for leaks. Toilet leaks are the most commonly found reason for increased water usage. A leaking toilet can waste anywhere from several gallons to more than 100 gallons per day, which equates to 9,000 gallons a quarter.

How do you know if your toilets leak?

In some cases, it's easy. If you have to jiggle a handle to make a toilet stop running, if you regularly hear sounds coming from a toilet that is not being used or if a toilet periodically turns the water on (i.e. "runs") for 15 seconds or so without you touching the handle, you can be fairly certain that you have a leak. But sometimes, even if your toilet doesn't have any of these symptoms, it's still possible that it is leaking. These "silent leaks" can go undetected for long periods of time, potentially wasting thousands of gallons of water.

How can you tell if your toilet has a "silent leak"?

Carefully remove the cover on the toilet tank and set it aside. Remove any "in-tank" bowl cleaners and flush so that the water in both the bowl and the tank are clear. Add dye to the tank. You can use dye capsules or tablets available from the hardware store, but food coloring or powdered fruit drink mix also work well. Put enough dye in the tank water to give the water a deep color. Wait 30 minutes and don't use the toilet during that time. After waiting 30 minutes, if the water in the

bowl contains dye, you'll know that the toilet is leaking. A properly operating toilet will store the water in the tank indefinitely without any water running into the bowl.

Your toilet is leaking – now what?

There are two possible culprits when a toilet leaks, the flush valve or the refill valve. To determine which is responsible for the leak, draw a pencil line on the inside of the tank at the waterline. Turn the water supply off, either under the tank or at the main shutoff and wait 20 to 30 minutes. If the water level remains at the pencil mark, the leak is occurring at the refill valve, the unit in the left side of the tank. If the water level falls below the pencil mark, the flush valve, the unit located in the center of the tank, is to blame. Most homeowners are capable of making their own toilet repairs. If you do not wish to make repairs to your leaking toilet, contact a local plumber to assist you. If you do wish to repair your leaking toilet, visit any hardware store or home improvement center, pick up the parts, turn off the water supply and follow directions. With a little effort, you can save many gallons of water and possibly reduce your water bill.