



## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY WATER BILL LOOKS TOO HIGH?

An unusually high water bill can be caused by a leak or a change in water use. Property owners are responsible for all private service water lines from the PSA's water main to the residence, and for leaks inside the home or building served. This flyer has the following information to help you in the event you have a high water bill.

- 💧 If you feel a bill is too high, check out the *Common causes* listed below.
- 💧 Look at "*Things to check if you get a bill that is higher than usual*".
- 💧 There is a useful chart showing how much water can be lost from various sizes of leaks.
- 💧 Basic instructions on using your water meter to check for leaks.
- 💧 See our official rules on *Leak Adjustments* after a leak is repaired.
- 💧 There is helpful information on how to *Be Water Wise* and save water and money.

### Common causes of high water bills

- 💧 A leaking toilet, or a toilet that continues to run after being flushed (see additional information on the next page)
- 💧 A dripping faucet - a faucet drip can waste 20 gallons of water a day or more
- 💧 Filling or topping off a swimming pool or hot tub
- 💧 Watering the lawn, new grass, or trees and leaking hoses and hose spigots
- 💧 Humidifiers attached to the furnace that are improperly adjusted or not working correctly
- 💧 Sump pumps that have water-powered back up
- 💧 Children home for summer vacations or school holidays and house guests
- 💧 Water-cooled air conditioners
- 💧 A broken water pipe or obvious leak - check the pipes in the basement or crawlspace and check the water heater for leaks
- 💧 Water softener problems - cycles continuously
- 💧 Running the water to avoid freezing water pipes during cold weather
- 💧 Wasting water by using running faucets, showers, and garden hoses too long or inefficiently

# Things to check if you get a bill that is higher than usual

## Changes in your water use

Did you have house guests, water your lawn more than usual, or do anything else out of the ordinary? If so, this may account for an increase in your water bill.

## 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 hoses, lines, and taps. If you have a leak, you may need to contact a plumber.

### 1-Outdoor and underground leaks

Leaks can also occur in harder to find places, such as under your home, crawl spaces. Also, check outdoor spigots and hoses, and look for wet spots in your yard, which may indicate a leak in your service line.

### 2-Toilet and faucet leaks

The most common cause of a high water bill is a leaking toilet or faucet. A continuously running toilet can waste up to 200 gallons a day or more. This can cause a terrible increase in a family's typical water use, so toilet leaks should be repaired as soon as possible. Some leaks are easy to find, such as a dripping faucet or running toilet. You can usually hear a running toilet, but not always. If you think your toilet might be leaking, try this:

#### **Do-it-yourself Toilet Leak Check:**

- 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 a leaky toilet, follow these four steps:
  1. Take the lid off of the tank behind the bowl, flush the toilet, and then wait for it to fully refill.
  2. Put a few drops of dye or a colored dye tablet (food coloring works well) in the tank.
  3. Wait at least 20 minutes; longer if you suspect it is a small leak.
  4. If there is any color 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.

### 3-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 into the ground next to the system. There are times when these systems will get stuck in a cycle which will cause higher water use.

## How much water can a hole in my plumbing leak?

The chart below shows the amount of water that can be lost (and billed to your account) for various size leaks at normal water pressure.

Leak Size		Gallons Lost Per Day	Gallons Lost Per Month
1/32-inch hole		15	450
1/16-inch hole		264	7,920
1/8-inch hole		934	28,300
1/4-inch hole		3,806	114,200
1/2-inch hole		15,226	1,827,000

### Using your meter to check for leaks



Before you start

-  Make sure all water appliances and fixtures are off.
-  Locate your water meter.

Read the dial on your meter

-  Remove the water meter box lid. When you're done, replace the lid.
-  Uncover the meter dial or clean it off so you can see it.
-  If the dial is not moving and no one is using water, you don't have a leak.
-  If the dial is moving, you do have a leak.

Finding the leak

-  Close the main water shut-off valve for your house.
-  Check that the water is off by opening a faucet.
-  If the meter dial stops moving after you closed the shut-off valve, then your leak is inside the house.
-  If the meter dial keeps turning after you closed the shut-off valve, then the leak is in your line between the meter and the valve.

## Is there any financial relief for water leaks?



Yes, there is. Here is our official rule on adjustment of bills for water leaks.

- 💧 When a leak occurs on the customer side of a PSA service meter that causes the metered water usage in any month to exceed three times the customer's normal usage\*, then after the leak is repaired and upon the customer's request, the PSA will adjust the customer's bill.
- 💧 Adjustments may be applied to no more than two consecutive months.
- 💧 Adjustments will be limited to one adjustment per running 12-month period, unless the customer's entire service line is replaced, as verified by the PSA.
- 💧 When an adjustment is made, the revised bill(s) for water will be the customer's average bill\*\* plus \$2 per 1000 gallons or the wholesale cost of the volume of water used, whichever is greater, over the minimum volume. If the leaked water did not enter the PSA sewer system, then the revised sewer bill will be the customer's average bill. If the leak did enter the PSA sewer system, then an additional charge of \$1 per 1000 gallons will apply to the sewer bill.

\* *Normal usage* is the customer's average monthly water usage during the six consecutive months immediately prior to the first month in which water usage was high.

\*\*The *average bill* is the monthly billed amount based on normal usage as defined above.

# Be Water Wise



In addition to finding and fixing leaks, lowering your water consumption is very important in reducing your water bills. These simple and effective tips can help you save water and money.

## **In the bathroom**

- 💧 Take 5-minute showers.
- 💧 Install water-saving shower heads. A quality water-saving shower head provides an ideal shower yet uses no more than 2.5 gallons per minute.
- 💧 Toilets use from 1.3 to 3.5 gallons per flush so don't use the toilet as a trashcan or ashtray.
- 💧 Replace your old toilet with a low-consumption toilet.
- 💧 Turn the water off while brushing teeth or shaving.

## **In the laundry room**

- 💧 Use the proper water level when washing clothes.
- 💧 When replacing a clothes washer, look for one with the *Energy Star* label.

## **In the Kitchen**

- 💧 Don't leave the water running when washing dishes by hand or rinsing fruits and vegetables. Instead, fill your sink or a bowl with water to wash and rinse.
- 💧 Instead of running the tap to get cool water for drinking, keep drinking water in the refrigerator or use the water dispenser on the refrigerator.
- 💧 Run the dishwasher only when full.

## **Outdoors**

- 💧 Use a hose nozzle when washing your car.
- 💧 Water lawns and gardens at the right time of day. Watering when the sun is low, winds are calm, and temperatures are cooler minimizes evaporation by as much as 30 percent. The best time to water is in the early morning.
- 💧 Install a rain barrel to collect rainwater and use it to water your lawn and plants or wash your car.
- 💧 Make sure you are not sending water down the drain. Place sprinklers to water plants, not the driveway, sidewalk, patio, or buildings.