

PREVENTING AND DETECTING LEAKS



Water pressure regulator

Leaks at your home or business cost money and waste our shared water resources. The good news is that most leaks are preventable or can be detected early.

The easiest way to avoid and detect leaks is:

- Learn to **read** and monitor your water bills and meter
- Test your toilets, irrigation system, and water pressure regularly

Pay attention to your water bills and call your water supplier with any questions you may have - they are there to help you! Your meter is an important tool that can save you water and money. Most water agencies have instructions on their websites about how to check their specific meters and the units of measurement they use for billing.

Constant leaks are those under pressure that keep the meter running all the time, such as a supply line leak. Intermittent leaks are those that don't always leak or show on your meter. For example, some types of leaks will only happen if a toilet flapper valve is leaking or when an irrigation valve is turned on.

The three most common leaks in homes are businesses are:

1. The main supply line from your meter to your building
2. Toilets
3. Irrigation systems

Checking for Supply Line Leaks - Constant Leaks

If you think you may have a leak, make sure all water is turned off and check your meter to see if it's moving. If it is moving, see if you have a "house" valve where the water enters your home or business. You can turn off this valve (slowly and smoothly) in order to isolate whether a possible leak is before or after this valve (the meter will stop moving if the leak is after the valve). If you don't locate the leak yourself, a plumber or leak detection company can be consulted.

Checking for Toilet Leaks - Constant or Intermittent

Even a small leak in a toilet can waste up to 200 gallons per day. Most toilet leaks are silent and invisible. Here's how to test your toilets:

- Open the tank and check the water fill line- it should not be overflowing into the fill tube. After that is adjusted, put dye tablets/strips or 3-4 drops of food coloring in the tank (behind the bowl).
- Don't flush the toilet for about 15-20 minutes, then check the toilet bowl to see if colored water has escaped into it from the tank.
- If you see colored water in the bowl, you should replace the flapper and/or the fill valve inside the toilet tank. Directions can be found online. Bring your old parts to the hardware store if you're a DIYer.

Checking for Irrigation Leaks

Irrigation systems can leak before, within, or after the irrigation valves that serve specific zones in your landscape. Constant leaks would indicate there is a leak in the hard piping before each valve, or in the landscape valve itself.

- Run each valve for 5 minutes and take a meter reading before and after. When you tally up how much water went through the meter for each valve/zone that ran, investigate the one with an unusually high flow. As well, while the zone is running, inspect for breaks, mis-directed heads, puddles, sunken or soft soil, etc.

Keeping Water Pressure at a Safe Range

If you live in an area with high water pressure, you'll need a pressure regulator (or PRV) for your home or business. A pressure gauge will tell you if it is over 80 psi. If so, you should adjust, replace, or install a new regulator so it keeps pressure between 60 and 80 psi for indoor plumbing. High pressure on pipes is like high blood pressure in your body - it needs to stay within normal range to prevent blow-outs.

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