

# Water Billing FAQs

## Where is my water meter located?

The meter is usually located next to your property line in direct line with the outside main faucet or valve (where you turn your water off to your house or business). It is housed in either a concrete or plastic meter box. If you have trouble locating your meter, call the City and we will help you. Records are kept on the location of each water meter, the age of the service, size, and any maintenance performed on the meter.

To check the meter, put on gloves, and insert a tool such as a screwdriver in the hole and pry open the concrete or plastic lid. A concrete lid is heavy, so be careful when handling it. To read the meter, lift the cover. (Always replace the cover on your water meter after you are finished. Be careful not to pinch the connecting wire when closing the cover.)

## How do I read my meter?

The water meter register is just like the mileage odometer on your car. It keeps a running total of all the water that has passed through the meter. The dial on the meter serving your home may look somewhat different, but they all work on the same principles. The register sweep hand will turn one full revolution with the use of one cubic foot of water. The markings on the outer edge of the dial indicate tenths and hundredths of a cubic foot. The six pronged star rotates whenever water flows through the meter and is called the low flow indicator. Read all the numbers from left to right that appear under the words Cubic Feet. The first digit on the right represents one cubic foot, the second from the right represents 10 cubic feet, the third from the right represents 100 cubic feet, and so on.

## Why don't you install gallon meters instead of cubic feet meters?

The industry standard is cubic feet, even though most people have a much better understanding of gallons than they do of cubic feet. We currently have nearly 2000 cubic foot registers. Changing them all to gallons at this point in time would be an expensive proposition. Its easy to convert cubic feet to gallons by multiplying the number of cubic feet by 7.5 (7.4805 to be precise!). Here's an example:  $150 \text{ cubic ft} \times 7.5 \text{ gals per cubic ft} = \text{approx. } 1125 \text{ gals}$

## **How do I calculate my use?**

To calculate your water use, subtract the previous meter reading from the current meter reading. For example:  $69671 - 69550 = 121$  cubic feet

## **What could cause my utility bill to be higher than normal?**

An unexpected quantity of water has passed through the meter due to 1) leakage in your plumbing, 2) irrigation needs, or 3) additional users or uses outside of your normal routine.

## **How do I check for leaks?**

To check for a leak you must first turn off all faucets inside and outside your house. Be certain the toilet is not flushing and the automatic ice cube maker is not operating when performing this task. When the water is turned off, look and make sure that the low flow indicator is not moving. A circular motion by the indicator suggests a leak. Read the meter by writing down the meter number and the location of the sweep arm. After reading the meter, use no water for at least two hours. Take a second reading. If you used no water, the two readings should be the same. If the reading has changed or the sweep hand has moved, something on the property may be pulling water through the meter. If your meter shows usage on the meter test, finding the problem is the responsibility of the property owner. But we can suggest some places to look.

## **Where are common leaks?**

One of the most common culprits is the toilet. Even though a toilet isn't running, it can still be leaking water. If you suspect a problem, put a few drops of food coloring in the tank and let it sit for several hours. If the dye has colored the water in the bowl, there is a leak. Also, look inside the tank for water going into the overflow pipe. Faucet leaks are more easily detected. Be sure to check seldom-used faucets that may be in the basement or in storage rooms. Worn washers or "O" rings usually cause faucet leaks. Check the outside taps for leaking water, particularly during the summer sprinkling season. A hose mistakenly left dribbling away in the grass or garden can waste thousands of gallons of water over the summer. Remember to close outside faucets tightly every time you shut off the water.

## **Can a leaking toilet go through a lot of water?**

Yes. While a slow drip on a faucet can waste 2 to 3 cubic feet a day (between 60 and 120 cubic feet per month), a leaky toilet can go through up to seven times that amount each day (between 420 and 840 cubic feet per month). That can add up to a lot of water.

## **Does the City issue an adjustment for leaks?**

Adjustments for the water bills are not allowed. However, if you did not use the sewer service, you may request an adjustment to the sewer portion of your bill. The Public Works Committee reviews each request and makes adjustments as necessary.

## **Can I turn my meter on or off?**

No. A City employee will do this for you at a charge of \$10. The water meter is the property of the City and damages to the meter could be charged to you.

## **My meter was replaced and now I'm using more water. Is my new meter running fast?**

No. All of our residential water meters (meters 1" in size and smaller) are positive displacement meters. We buy this type of meter because when they fail, they fail in favor of the consumer. The meters have a dial similar to a paddle wheel. The dial will only turn as fast as the water turns it. As a meter gets old, it could corrode and slowly grind to a halt. Therefore, an old meter could actually be registering less water than is actually used. As meters age and with extended use, the meters will either maintain their accuracy or slow down. Most likely the old meter was slowing down.

## **How can I have my bill payment automatically deducted from my checking or savings account each month?**

The City offers many automatic payment options including direct debit of checking or savings on the billing due date. To initiate this service, complete a direct debit application and return it to City Hall. The City also offers automatic credit card payment options as well.

## **Does the City charge late fees on past due bills?**

A \$10.00 account late fee is assessed to all utility customers with a past due balance 15 days past the due date. If the water is turned off for non-payment a disconnect fee of \$150 will be charged.

## **How can I reduce my bill?**

By conserving water in your home, you not only reduce your water and sewer bill, but you will also save on the energy needed to heat the water or run appliances.