

How to Read your Water Meter and Check for Leaks

Learning to read your water meter can help you discover water leaks, monitor your usage and double check your water bill.

STEP 1: Locate Your Meter

Water meters are typically located in your basement.

STEP 2: Read Your Water Meter

All customers within the Town of Billerica have their water use measured by a meter. This results in each customer paying their share of operating the system based upon the amount of water used.

All Town of Billerica meters measure water in cubic feet (one cubic foot equals about 7.5 gallons). Charges for the amount of water consumed are based on the number of units of 100 cubic feet (748.6 gallons) you use during a billing period. Your sewer bill (if you are connected to Town Sewer) is based on your water consumption as recorded on the water meter.

The water meter is just like a car odometer. The dials advance as the water passes through the meter. There is a red triangle on the face of the meter that moves whenever there is water usage. If the red triangle is moving and there is no water turned on, you may have a leak.

STEP 3: Check for Leaks

Faucets and Showerheads

Dripping, trickling, or oozing faucets and showerheads can waste from 75 to several hundred gallons of water a week depending on the size of the drip. Worn-out washers are the main cause of these leaks and a new one generally costs about 25 cents.

Faucets typically use 2 to 7 gallons per minute. Installing a low-flow faucet aerator can reduce the flow by as much as 25% or up to a gallon and a half per minute. Be sure to remove your aerator periodically to clean the particles that may have collected in the screen.

A Simple Test for Leaks

A leaky faucet is pretty obvious. But hidden leaks in the toilet, under the sink, or behind a washing machine can waste a gigantic amount of water, and they could be damaging your floors or ceilings too. Take a reading of your water meter. Wait an hour, making sure no one uses any water in your home. Check it again. If the reading has changed, you have got at least one leak and you need to investigate.

Toilets

That trickling sound you hear in the bathroom could be a leaky toilet wasting 50 gallons of water a day or more. But sometimes it leaks silently. Try this:

Crush a dye tablet in its envelope and carefully empty the contents into the center of the toilet tank and allow it to dissolve. Wait about 8-9 minutes. Inspect the toilet bowl for signs of blue dye indicating a leak.

If the dye has appeared in the bowl, your flapper or flush valve may need to be replaced. Parts are inexpensive and fairly easy to replace. If no dye has appeared in the 8 to 9 minutes time, you probably don't have a leak

You Could Also:

Add a few drops of food coloring (or any colored liquid) to the toilet tank. If the color appears in the toilet bowl, the toilet is leaking.

LOCATING LEAKS

Now that you know how to read your water meter, use this knowledge to locate leaks in your home.

- First turn off all water inside and outside your home
- Then, read your water meter (from left to right). Mark where the pointer hand is on the meter
- Wait for an extended period of time (about 1 hour).
- Re-read the meter again as well as look at the location of the pointer hand. If there is any change, you have a leak in your house