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Customer Tips for Finding Leaks

How can I tell if I have a leak?

Locate your water meter, which will typically be in your basement. During a period when no water will be utilized for several hours (when going to bed, work, school, or on a long trip), flip open the cover (if applicable) and take a picture of the water meter display. Before using the water after waking up or getting home, take another picture of the water meter display. If the number on the display has changed at all, then you most likely have a plumbing leak, or you may want to repeat this leak test to verify the results. Since water meters typically read in 100's of gallons, the longer the leak test is conducted, the more accurate and representative it will be; especially if you only have a small leak.

Common sources of leaks

A running toilet is the most common cause of high inflow from a house into a private sewer lateral. Many times, toilet leaks are silent, i.e. are not audible or noticeable to occupants. Leaks like this not only increase the amount of wastewater the Authority must pay to pump and treat, but it also increases your metered water usage and your quarterly water and sewer bills:

- A small leak can waste 30 gallons per day or about 2,700 additional gallons per quarter. This can result in an additional \$49.25 or more in combined charges for quarterly water and sewer bills, based on 2019 Rates.
- A medium-sized leak can waste roughly 250 gallons per day or about 22,500 gallons per quarter. This can result in an additional \$457.65 or more in combined charges for quarterly water and sewer bills, based on 2019 Rates.

What is a “silent” toilet leak?

This kind of leak occurs because of an ineffective flush valve system inside the water tank. If the flapper inside the tank forms an imperfect seal, water will leak around it and flow into the bowl. A broken fill valve in the tank can also cause the shut-off valve to fail to close, meaning water will continuously flow into the tank and into the overflow tube. Neither will be obvious, but both will lead to a large waste of water, sometimes up to 300 gallons a day.

How can I tell I have a “silent” toilet leak?

Look for an increase in your water bills. If you suspect it may come from a toilet leak, then place a few drops of water/food coloring in the tank. If the color enters the bowl within 10 minutes, you have a flush valve leak. Leaks with the fill valve are harder to find; you must remove the lid from the tank and observe the overflow tube for a period to see if it is continually removing water from the tank.