

NEWS SPLASH

Spring 2006

DO YOU HAVE A LEAK?

Does your water usage seem to be climbing with each new bill you receive? It could be due to a leak in your water system. Leaks that are not repaired can waste hundreds of gallons of water each year, resulting in large water bills.

If you have noticed that your water use has increased, and suspect that you might have a leak, there are a few simple steps to follow to determine if your suspicion is correct:

1. Make sure that there is no water being used inside or outside of your home.
2. Locate your water meter. Most meters are located at the front part of your property next to your property line or corner. The meter is located in a black box in the ground, usually marked on the lid with the words "water meter." Sometimes you may see two meters in one box, so make sure you have identified the meter that belongs to you and not your neighbor. Your meter number is located on your bill and is usually imprinted on the meter itself.
3. Most meters have a leak indicator dial. The dial will either be a white or black triangle, a red needle, or a black star shape. There should be no movement occurring on the leak indicator when your water is not in use. If you see this dial moving when no water is being used, it could indicate that water is flowing through your meter. You may possibly have a leak.
4. If your meter is not equipped with a leak indicator, write down the reading from your meter. After 1-2 hours read your meter again. Do not use any water during this time. The numbers should be the same. If they have changed and you have not used any water during that time, you may possibly have a leak.

If you follow the steps above and have determined that you most likely do not have a leak, this may mean you are actually using the water for which you are being billed. Ask yourself some hard questions: Do my four teenagers each take half hour showers?

Do I water my lawn every day? Did I have a house full of relatives staying with me over the holidays? You may want to investigate ways to reduce your water consumption. The District has water conservation brochures available at our office, and conservation information can also be found on our website. Please contact us if you are interested in receiving water conservation materials.

If you have determined that you **do** have a leak, you will now need to determine if the leak is inside the house or in the line between the meter and your home. Follow the steps below to narrow down your search:



1. Locate the main shut-off valve to your home, commonly called the master valve. This valve is usually located where your service line enters into your home or close to that point. It is often located in your garage or next to your hot water heater. It may also be found in the crawl space of your home.
2. Shut the valve off. Verify that the valve is off by turning on a faucet. If you have the right valve turned off, there should be no water coming through the fixture.

(Continued on back page)



DO YOU HAVE A LEAK? (continued from front page)

3. Go back outside and look at your water meter. If the spinning has stopped, the potential leak may be somewhere inside of your home. If the spinning has not stopped, the potential leak may likely be located somewhere between your meter and your service line.

The most common leaks inside of a home are leaking toilets and dripping faucets. These leaks can usually be repaired by the do-it-yourselfer. Occasionally, the float plunger ball in the back of the toilet may need to be readjusted to keep water from filling more than ½ inch below the top of the overflow tube. You may need to replace the flapper if it is no longer seating and is instead allowing water to leak through the toilet. A dripping faucet may only require a new gasket. These parts are available at most local hardware stores. They are relatively inexpensive and can save you money in the long run!

Outdoor leaks are more difficult to find. If you have an irrigation system, turn it on once a month and make sure everything is operating properly. Check for broken sprinkler heads that may have been hit by a lawn mower. Look for signs of things that seem to be out of the ordinary – brown spots on the lawn, abnormal boggy areas, or flowing water coming out of the ground during the dry summer. If your system is not providing maximum coverage from all of your zones, or if you notice that your bill is higher than what you use in a normal irrigation season, you may have a leak in the system. Contact an irrigation contractor to assist you in locating your leak. You can try shutting off your irrigation system where it branches off from your domestic water line at the auxiliary valve or at your backflow assembly and checking your meter's leak detector. Does the leak detector stop spinning when the irrigation system is off? This could mean that your leak is located in the irrigation system. Further investigation will also be needed at the zone valves, where you can listen to see if you can hear water leaking through the lines.

If you have located your leak and have determined that you are unable or unwilling to make the repair yourself, you may need to hire a plumber, irrigation specialist, underground utility contractor or other another professional to make the repair. We recommend that you choose a contractor who is licensed and bonded, and be sure to ask for references. It is always good to get a few quotes to compare pricing. Be sure to check and see if the quote is provided free of charge, as quotes are not always free!

Take the time to monitor your water consumption and promptly repair any leaks you might discover. You could end up saving money and will also help conserve our water resources.

IRRIGATION SYSTEM BACKFLOW ASSEMBLY TESTS

Spring is here, and soon many of our customers will be turning on landscape irrigation systems to prepare for the warm days ahead. Spring is also a great time to have the backflow assembly on your irrigation system tested. Washington state law requires water providers to protect drinking water quality by ensuring that all cross connections are protected by backflow prevention assemblies. A cross connection is a point in a plumbing system where the drinkable water supply is connected to a non-drinkable source. Irrigation systems are considered to be cross connection hazards because bacterial and chemical contaminants found on lawns could make their way into the public water system during a backflow incident.

Water normally flows in one direction, from the public water system into your home. Backflow occurs when the normal direction of the flow is reversed, generally through a loss of pressure from undersized piping, a water main break, or use of a hydrant during firefighting.

Backflow prevention assemblies prevent contaminated water from entering the drinking water supply. They are required to be tested upon installation and once each year to ensure proper function. If you have a landscaper or irrigation contractor maintain your landscape, ask if they have a state-certified backflow assembly tester in their company who can conduct the backflow test for you.

If you don't know if you have a current backflow assembly test on record, please contact the District's cross connection control specialist, Chic Nessly, at (425) 392-4931 extension 213, or email him at chic@samplat.wa.org for more information. Chic will be able to help you determine whether or not your test is current or if we need a new test for your assembly. Without proper backflow protection, your irrigation system could endanger the health of your family, neighbors and others in the community who are using the public water system. If you have a backflow prevention assembly on your property, please make arrangements to have it tested as soon as possible and send a copy of the test results to the District. Thanks for helping us protect your water quality!



Backflow Assembly Test Kit



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