

# Common Causes of High Water Bills

## Did You Know?

Average water use per day is 60 gallons per person, typical allocation of the water is:

- Showers and Faucets use between 1.7 and 2.2 gallons per min.
- Toilets use between 3 and 4 gallons per flush.
- A running garden hose can run at a rate of 12-15 gallons per min.
- Irrigation heads use an average of 2 to 3 gallons per min. **Formula: Number of heads that run at one time (x) average of 2.5 gallons per min (x) minutes ran= gallons per cycle.**  
This would need to be repeated for each zone in your yard and multiplied by the number of times a day you water your lawn.

## Why is My Bill Higher than Normal?

An unusually high water bill is most often caused by a leak or change in water use. Some common causes of high water bills include:

- A leaking toilet, toilets leak anywhere from .2 gallons per min up to 4 gallons per min toilets can be tricky and can be hard to diagnose. Things to check:
  - **Stuck Float:** Take the lid off the back of the toilet and see if water is spilling over the top of the overflow tube. This is the tube in the center usually black plastic. If water is flowing over the top you have stuck float or improperly adjusted water level.
  - **Flapper:** When a flapper begins to fail it can allow water to seep under the seal, this water runs in the bowl and out the drain. You typically will not hear this but you can check by placing a few drops of food coloring in the tank on the back of the toilet. If the water in the bowl changes color after an hour or so then you are leaking by the flapper. This may not always work because toilets can be intermittent when they first begin to fail. Another check is to run your fingers along the flapper, if they come away with a black residue then this indicates your flapper is breaking down.
  - **Stuck Flapper:** A flapper can stick open after a flush and may have to be closed by hand to release it. The chain can kink causing up to 4 gallons per min to be wasted. This happens a lot and most homeowners never know because they have left the room assuming the toilet will quit running after it fills. This can settle on its own but that is rare.

- A dripping faucet; a faucet drip can waste 20 gallons of water a day or more.
- Filling or topping off a swimming pool or hot tub:
  - Pool cleaners will throw the hose in the pool and forget about it. The hose will run for several days before it is caught running at a rate of 12-15 gallons per min. That's as much as 21'600 gallons in a 24 hour period!
- Watering the lawn, new grass, or trees; also check for an open hose spigots.
  - Irrigation heads use an average of 2 to 3 gallons per min. **Formula: Number of heads that run at one time (x) average of 2.5 gallons per min (x) minutes ran= gallons per cycle.** This would need to be repeated for each zone in your yard and multiplied by the number of times a day you water your lawn.
  - Even off irrigation can leak past a solenoid valve and you will never see the water surface due to our sandy soils.
  - Sometimes spigots fail, always be sure to look at the end of your hose to be sure the water has stopped flowing. If the hose is in a garden or grassy area you may not notice the water continuing to seep out.
- Humidifiers attached to the home's furnace that are improperly adjusted or not working correctly.
- Sump pumps that have water powered back up.
- A Change in Occupancy:
  - Kids home for summer vacations or school holidays
  - Guests
  - Renters: Each set of renters are different, some are respectful some are not. They don't pay for the water you do. They use the hose to cool off hot tubs and wash the salt air off their cars daily. Some advice is to remove the hose or put a lock on the spigot that only the homeowner or pool guy can access.
- Water-cooled air conditioners
- A broken water pipe or obvious leak:
  - Check the pipes in the crawlspace or under the home especially after a freeze.
  - Check around the base of your water heater for moisture.
- Water softeners can fail and cycle continuously.
- Running the water to avoid freezing water pipes during cold weather is big in our area due to the raised homes and exposed pipes. Keep in mind a dripping faucet can use as much as 20 gallons per day. If the home drips for a full billing cycle you have used an additional 1,800 gallons.

Check for leaks frequently, leaks whether unseen or unfixed, can waste hundreds and even thousands of gallons of water. It is important to routinely check your plumbing and home for

leaky faucets, toilets, and outside taps and irrigation lines. Outdoor and underground leaks can also occur and in harder to find places, such as under your home or crawl spaces.

### **What Can I do if My Bill is Unusually High?**

If you receive a bill that you feel is too high, check over the common causes listed above. This may help to pinpoint the source of the high bill. If you find a leak and have it repaired please go online to <https://www.darenc.com/departments/water-department>, fill out a leak adjust form and submit it with your invoice from your plumber or receipt form your local hardware store.