

# High Water / Sewer bill? You probably have a leak!

If you received a high consumption notice or had a high water & sewer bill, chances are you have a leak in your home or business. Most leaks are a running toilet. Here are a few tips to assist you in finding leaks and calculating your usage and losses.

## It's Only a Small Drip...Right?

Slow drips of water can add up quickly. A toilet that "keeps running" after you flush, or a sink that drips after it is turned off, can waste tens of thousands of gallons of water a quarter, enough to fill a swimming pool. If the drip is hot water, you are paying for wasted energy too. You should fix leaks as soon as you find them, it could be costing you a couple of dollars a day in wasted water. Leaks won't go away on their own, but they could be occasional reoccurrences. Some toilets will leak for a short time, then stop, then leak again later, depending on how the leak occurs. Most likely a reoccurring leak is the toilet flapper valve that does not seat properly, or maybe a sink that has to be shut off tightly to keep it from dripping.

## Toilets

One of the most costly household wastes of water is a leaky toilet. According to the American Water Works Association, toilets account for 45% of all indoor water use in a typical residence. *It is estimated that 20% of all toilets leak!*

In a properly functioning toilet, water will not leak from the tank to the bowl without being flushed. Toilets leak from either a poor flapper seal or a float that does not shut the water off. There are many reasons a flapper does not seat, small particles of dirt, warped flapper, cracked flapper, or the chain is set too short and the flapper does not go all the way down, etc. A flapper valve should be replaced every 3 to 5 years.

You can test for a flapper leak by either putting food coloring in the tank and see if it appears in the bowl, or shut the valve off to the toilet and see if the tank water level goes down.

If you see water going out the overflow tube, then the float is probably set wrong, the float has a hole in it, or the fill valve is broken.

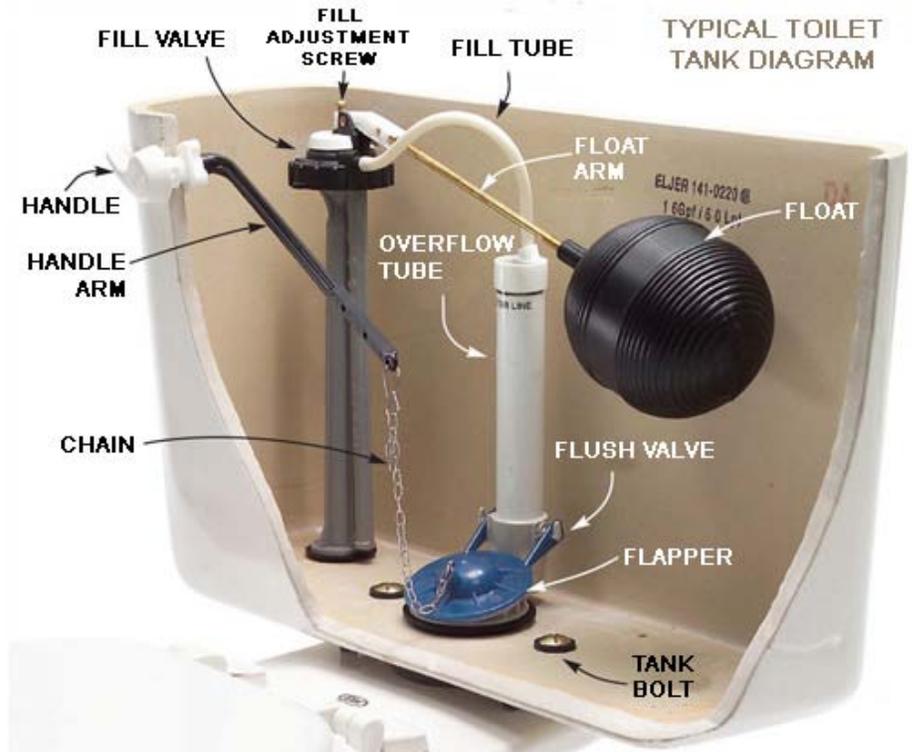
Toilet leaks can range from small to large, constant to random, you might hear them, or they could be silent. They all cause wasted water. Depending on the water pressure to your house, a running toilet can leak 1 gallon of water per minute which adds up to 1,440 gallons per day.

Fortunately, most toilet leaks are relatively easy to fix. Most hardware, plumbing, and home improvement stores supply all the internal parts for a toilet repair. You usually do not have to replace the entire toilet. Sometimes a cheap repair kit is not as good, or does not last as long. The cost of a good repair kit is a lot less expensive than a high water bill!

## Faucets & Shower Heads

A leaking faucet is frequently the result of a bad rubber washer. The washer on a sink is typically located under the handle. A washer is relatively easy to replace with the right tools. It does require shutting off the water under the sink, and removing the handle. Check local home centers or the Internet (keywords "repairing leaky faucets") for help on how to repair faucet leaks.

A leaky faucet that drips at the rate of one drip per second can use about 1,000 gallons per quarter! A showerhead leaking at 10 drips per minute can use over 100 gallons per quarter.



**Sprinkler Systems, Lawn & Garden Watering**

Watering your lawn and garden uses a lot more water than most people realize. Some lawn sprinklers can spray several gallons of water per minute. Depending on how often and how long you run the sprinkler, you can use tens of thousands of gallons of water a quarter.



A permanent irrigation system should be checked each spring before use to make sure it was not damaged by frost or freezing. An irrigation system pipe with pressure set at 60 pounds per square inch that has a pinhole of 1/32nd of an inch in diameter can waste about 19,000 gallons per quarter!

Check your garden hose for leaks at its connection to the spigot. If it leaks while you run your hose, replace the nylon or rubber hose washer and ensure a tight connection to the spigot using pipe tape and a wrench.

**Water Meter Leak Detection**

If you want to see if you have a leak, you can check the water meter leak detection dial. It is either a black triangle or a small red dial. If all the water is off in the house and the leak detection dial is spinning, you have a leak.



**How Much Water Is Lost?**

Below are some typical leakages and uses that can quickly add up water usage and costs on your water and sewer bill.

Leak Source	Typical Leakage or usage	Gallons per Day	Gallons per Quarter
Silent toilet leak	1/4 gallon per minute	360	32,400
Audible toilet leak	1 gallon per minute	1,440	129,600
Overflow tube in toilet tank (loud running water sound)	1/4" in diameter	7,500	675,000
Leaking faucet	1 drip per second	9	810
Leaking showerhead	10 drips per minute	2	135
In-ground pipe hole	1/32" in diameter (size of pinhead)	210	18,900
Lawn sprinkler, 4 hours a day	5 gallons per minute	1,200	108,000

**Can't find a leak?**

If you are having difficulty finding a leaking fixture, the Authority will be happy to send someone to assist. Just remember, not all leaks occur continuously. They might come and go, and be hard to detect. For further assistance contact the Cornwall Borough Municipal Authority at 717-274-5441.