Did You Know?

Every month the Public Works crew goes out to read all the water meters in town. Most homes and businesses have a radio hooked up to the meter which sends a signal to our handheld reader of the meter's measurement. Some buildings have an older style meter in which the operator must physically inspect it to obtain the usage measurement. After downloading the readings, our system generates several reports. The report I want to talk about today is the "High/Low Exception Report".

The High/Low Report lists all accounts with a 100% increase or decrease compared to last month's reading. The first hot month of the year, this report is sometimes 5 pages long due to watering our lawns and gardens. We review this report every month, looking up each account to compare last year's usage at the same time, trying to find any consistencies with each customer, and then we call users trying to find out if there is a leak (which you may or may not know exists). We end up calling around ten customers every month to inquire about high water usage.

Many times the usage was due to having guests, or if a sandpoint well needed repair and the customer used city water on the lawn/garden. Sometimes a customer has no idea they may have a leak and our call helps them investigate where the usage occurred. Often the customer does find a leak and confirms our suspicion (well, the report's suspicion anyhow).

Waste Per Quarter at 60 PSI Water Pressure

Diameter of Stream	Gallons	Cubic Feet	Cubic Meters
1/4"	1,181,500	158,000	4,475
3/16"	666,000	89,031	2,521
1/8"	296,000	39,400	1,115
1/16"	74,000	9,850	280

A continuous leak from a hole the size shown, over a three month period, wastes water in the amounts shown above.

Even a steady stream just 1/16” wastes 74,000 gallons of water over three months! That’s the little dot you see in the table above. If you have a steadier stream, it sure adds up!

So, you got a call from the City about high water usage. Now what?

If all the faucets and plumbing fixtures in your house are turned off and the indicator on your water meter continues to measure running water, you're wasting water and money!

The meter doesn't lie, but it can die. It measures and records water that ran through it. Meters do stop measuring at times. This is called a “dead meter”.

What to do:

Look for the leak

Indoor leaks usually create obvious signs. Look for water stains on walls or ceilings, a puddle on the floor, or you may notice/feel soggy flooring. Listen to toilets – a worn-out flapper on the flush valve creates a hiss and is a common cause of slow, constant water flow. (A toilet is the #1 culprit based on our experience at City Hall. A toilet that requires you to "jiggle the handle" is one that is wasting water.)

Check the Line Between the Meter & House

If your water meter is outside the house, the first step is to shut off the main water valve at the house and check the meter. If it is still registering water flow, this indicates there is a leak between the meter and the house.

Inspect the Spigots

Disconnect all the hoses and make sure the spigots aren't leaking. A leaking water spigot may go unnoticed if a hose is attached that runs out into the yard or garden. If you find one that keeps dribbling water, a new valve seat washer is probably the best solution. If the spigot leaks at the top near the handle, replace the packing nut washer.

Check your Sprinkler System

Outdoor leaks usually seep into the ground and can go on for years without being noticed. A malfunctioning irrigation valve will allow water to continue to dribble out into the yard. Irrigation systems are another cause of hidden leaks. Check for irrigation leaks by shutting off the valve in the house that feeds the irrigation system. If the meter stops spinning, you've found the problem. Narrow the search even more by looking for wet spots in the yard or areas of grass that are especially green. A malfunctioning zone valve is usually the cause.

(*Source: www.familyhandyman.com)*

Happy to help.

As always, we're here to help! If you have received a call from us alerting you of high water usage and you have performed the above investigative steps, yet you still have not detected any leaks, please call us back and we will try and help you find the source. Meters do not read forward, so water is being "used" (leaking) somewhere and we are here to help you.

If you locate a leak we didn't even know about - please call us and tell us about it! We are currently calculating the winter water usage to determine the sewer average: using the months of December, January, February and March, averaging the water usage and this becomes your sewer rate every July (Ordinance #9-4-1). We want to ensure any leaks are fixed prior to this winter calculation.
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