

## Water Bill Seem Too High?

It is important to find the possible reasons for high utility bills as soon as possible. The following information will help you determine the reason for the high usage.

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### Common causes for high water usage

- A leaking toilet – toilet leaks can range from small to large, heard or silent, constant or random. A running or leaking toilet can use up to 6,000 gallons per month. In a properly functioning toilet, no water should move from the tank to the bowl unless it is being flushed.
- Irrigation – watering the lawn is the most common reason for high usage in the summer. Running your sprinkler for just one hour can use 400 gallons of water and automatic irrigation systems use larger amounts. An irrigation system should be checked each spring before use to make sure it was not damaged by frost or freezing. An irrigation system that has a leak of 1/32<sup>nd</sup> of an inch in diameter can waste 6,300 gallons of water per month.
- A family of 4 uses an average of 10,560 gallons of water in a normal 30-day period, so during these unprecedented times of COVID, most usage will likely be higher due to families spending much more time at home.
- Filling or topping off a swimming pool – especially in a hot dry summer.
- Outdoor or underground leaks
- Dripping faucet; a faucet drip can use 20 gallons or more of water per day.

### What to check for when usage seems unusually high

- Check your history. Your water bill will show you the billing calendar timeframe for the bill. Compare this to SAME timeframe on previous bills. Are your water usage patterns consistent? In the time period for your bill, has there been a one time or unusual event that caused water usage to spike? Did you have guests or an increase in occupancy? Did you fill a swimming pool? Has it been extremely dry causing you to water the landscape more frequently? Did you have a leak, such as a running toilet that has now been repaired? To view history call (616) 530-4973 to speak to our Utility Billing Clerk or on-line please visit: <https://bsaonline.com/?uid=238>
- Check every toilet in the home for leaks. We suggest you remove the lid off the tank behind the bowl, flush and wait for it to refill. Then add a few drops of dye in the tank and wait for 15 -20 minutes; if there is any color in the bowl there is a leak. Toilets are by far the main source of water usage in the home, accounting for nearly 30% of an average home's indoor water consumption. Older, inefficient toilets use as much as 6 gallons per flush and also happen to be a major source of wasted water in many homes.

- Monitor your meter for usage when there should be none. Inside meters for a building on a basement are normally located at the wall in the basement. An indoor water meter for a slab foundation building is usually located in a utility room or closet. We suggest you read your meter just before you go to bed and then again first thing in the morning (before any water is used). If the meter registers usage while no water has been used, there is water flow and something is using water you are not aware of.
- Check outdoor spigots for leaks or look for wet spots in your lawn.

If after performing the meter tests and analyzing your water bill, you find nothing to explain the high water usage, you will want to continue monitoring the incoming bills to understand your usage patterns. If your usage drops back to normal, there was likely was an event causing the high usage during that period. If the usage continues to be higher than normal, you should check anything you have on a timer, such as water softeners or irrigation systems that might be cycling longer than you set them for originally.

If you are concerned that that your bill is too high simply because you cannot believe you have used the amount of water the meter indicates, you can opt to have your municipality test the meter. The test is performed by an independent contractor. There is form you will need to complete, and the cost of the test is \$200, which is paid upfront. If the meter is found to be faulty, the \$200 is refunded, and the City will adjust your bill accordingly. If the meter is found to be accurate, the \$200 will be used to cover the costs of the testing. \*Be aware that meters generally will slow down with age (register less water passing through). Rarely do they speed up with age (register more water passing through).

Please contact the Utility Billing department for more information regarding meter testing: (616) 530-4973.

**The following table will give examples of water usage**

Product	Frequency	Consumption
Irrigation System	15 minutes 3 times/week	17,280 gallons/month
Sprinkler	1 hour 3 times/week	12,240 gallons/month
Toilet Flushing	Per Flush	3.5 gallons
Shower	5 minutes	25 gallons
Pressure Washer	4 Hours	1,000 gallons
Faucet	Daily	26 gallons
Average per person	Daily	80-100 gallons

