



City of Hitchcock

Newsletter April 2021

WHY DID MY WATER BILL GO UP?

When you are used to paying a certain amount for your water bill each month, a sudden spike can come as quite a shock. You might think the water company made some kind of mistake — but the reality is that a sudden increase in your water bill was likely caused by something in your home. Here are some common reasons why your water bill might suddenly be much higher than normal:

1. **A seasonal increase in water use.** This one might go without saying, but sometimes people forget that their water bill will increase when they fill their pool or hot tub, or even when they start having houseguests on a more regular basis. Water consumption can also increase during the summer months when people begin watering outdoor plants.
2. **A leaking or runny toilet.** Toilets are one of the biggest uses of water in our homes. If one of your toilets has a leak or runs non-stop, your total water consumption will likely increase by hundreds of gallons, which can lead to a drastic increase in your water bill. If you notice any of these tell-tale signs of toilet troubles, contact a professional plumber right away:
 - Your toilet continues making noise long after it is finished flushing
 - There is water leaking around the base of the toilet
 - There is a sewage smell in your bathroom
 - The toilet regularly gets clogged or has trouble flushing
 - There are cracks in the porcelain
3. **Leaky faucets.** If you notice one of your faucets dripping or leaking, it will probably waste an awful lot of water over the course of a month — maybe not as much as a running toilet, but still enough to cause an increase in your water bill.
4. **An underground leak.** If there is an underground leak on your property, it could cause a significant increase in your water bill. Unfortunately, an underground leak can be pretty tough to detect yourself, but if you notice any of these common signs of an underground leak, contact a professional plumber:
 - Unusual wet, mushy areas on your property
 - Dirt, rust, or air in your water
 - New potholes or sinkholes on your property
 - A very noticeable drop in water pressure in your home
5. **Outdoor leaks.** A leaky hose, dripping faucet, or malfunctioning sprinkler system could cause a sudden spike in your water bill. On a dry day when there has not been any rain, walk around your property and look for wet spots around any water source on your property. Even if you cannot see something that is physically dripping, a puddle or dark spot that never dries up could indicate that there is a leak nearby.
6. **A leaky dishwasher.** Warped, wet, or discolored cabinetry, floors, or walls surrounding your dishwasher could be a sign that it is leaking. Even if it only leaks a little, that extra water could really add up over time and lead to a higher water bill.
7. **A leaky washing machine.** Check behind and under your washing machine to make sure there are no signs of a leak, like warped or stained flooring. Similar to your dishwasher, even a small leak in your washing machine could be enough to make a difference in your home’s total water consumption.

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DATES TO REMEMBER

- 4/19/2021 City Commission Meeting at 6:00pm.
- 4/20/2021 Planning and Zoning Board Meeting at 5:00pm.

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WHY DID MY WATER BILL GO UP?

An old or leaky water heater. If your water heater is leaking water or is not working properly, it could lead to a spike in your water bill — and it could also be dangerous. Look around the base of the tank to see if there are any visible signs of leaks. If you do not see any signs of leaks but have noticed that your water is taking longer to heat up, your water is cloudy, or you hear popping or rumbling sounds coming from your water heater, contact your plumber right away.

Not only could a leak or other plumbing issue lead to a spike in your water bill, but if it goes unnoticed, it could also cause serious damage to your property. It's worth noting that slow leaks and other maintenance issues are often excluded opens a pop-up with definition of excluded from home insurance coverage, so it's important to tackle any potential issues as early as possible. If you've experienced a sudden increase in your water bill and you're having trouble figuring out what might have caused it, reach out to a professional plumber as soon as possible.

WATER CONSERVATION CHECKLIST

Indoor Tips

- ◇ Check your toilet for leaks. Put a few drops of food coloring in the tank. If color appears in the bowl without flushing, you have a leak that needs repair.
- ◇ Replace older toilets. WaterSense® labeled high-efficiency models use 1.28 gallons per flush. Consider installing a dual flush model that can use even less water
- ◇ Take shorter showers. Try for less than 5 minutes. If you take a bath, only fill the tub half full.
- ◇ Replace bathroom faucet aerators and showerheads*. Aerators use 0.5 gallons per minute and showerheads use 1.5 gallons per minute or less.
- ◇ Turn off the water. Don't use water while you shave, brush your teeth, lather in the shower, and shampoo/condition your hair.
- ◇ Fix leaky/dripping faucets. Even a slow drip can waste several gallons a day.
- ◇ Only run your dishwasher with a full load. Scrape food from plates instead of rinsing them.
- ◇ Chill drinking water. Put water in the refrigerator to cool instead of running the faucet.
- ◇ Replace your clothes washer. Energy Star® rated models use less water.



Outdoor Tips

- ◇ Adjust sprinklers so your lawn gets only as much water as it needs and there is no runoff.
- ◇ Choose drought-tolerant plants. When landscaping, group plants with similar water needs together. Add compost or mulch around trees and plants to conserve water.
- ◇ Check your irrigation system. Repair any leaks as soon as possible.
- ◇ Sweep it up. Clean your driveway or sidewalk with a broom instead of a hose.
- ◇ Catch rainwater. Use a rain barrel/rainwater harvesting for your landscape.

TEXAS WATER CODE

Texas Water Code § 11.086, entitled "OVERFLOW CAUSED BY DIVERSION OF WATER", states the following: No person may divert or impound the natural flow of surface waters in this state, or permit a diversion or impounding by him to continue, in a manner that damages the property of another by the overflow of the water diverted or impounded. For purposes of the statute, the term "surface water" means water that is diffused over the ground from falling rains or melting snows and continues to be such until it reaches some bed or channel in which water is accustomed to flow. A landowner is entitled to rely upon continuation of the natural flow of "surface water." When rainfall that is under control by ditches, tanks, ponds, or pipes is no longer considered "surface water," for purposes of the statute. So-called "surface water" does not follow a defined course or channel and does not gather into or form a natural body of water. The statute does not interfere with the right of a landowner to drain his or her land into natural drainways where the tendency of the water is naturally to drain toward that drainway. Of course, owners must act in a reasonable manner.

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR YARD WASTE

Many homeowners and landscape maintenance companies are guilty of sweeping or blowing yard waste, like grass clippings and fallen tree leaves, in the street or down the storm drain. When it rains, yard waste left in streets, on sidewalks, or in driveways will wash into nearby storm drains. Once in the storm drain system, the yard waste can enter local bodies of water without being treated or cleaned.

The problem

While grass clippings, tree leaves, and other yard waste are natural, they still pollute our local waterways. As yard waste breaks down or decomposes in a local creek, stream, river, or lake, it depletes the oxygen in the water. Aquatic life, such as fish, need oxygen to survive. If oxygen levels become too low, fish and other aquatic life cannot survive.

If grass clippings and tree leaves are washed or dumped down a storm drain, the storm drain may become clogged. The next time that it rains, or yard irrigation runs off into the street, the water that would normally flow down the storm drain will be blocked by the yard waste. This can cause flooding.



Mowing

“Leaving it on the lawn” and “Don’t Bag It!” methods aim to recycle your yard waste—and its nutrients—back into your landscape. This may reduce your need for chemical fertilizers. The rule of thumb for mowing the lawn is remove no more than one-third of the grass surface at any one time. With this mowing schedule, you no longer need to bag your grass clippings but can instead leave them on the lawn. (Do not mow when your grass is wet, as wet clippings clump together and smother your lawn.)

Grass clippings return valuable nutrients to the soil. They contain about four percent nitrogen, 0.5 percent phosphorus, and about two percent potassium, as well as the necessary minor elements plants need.

During the fall, you may not need to rake your leaves and collect them. Instead, you could mow them! A light covering of leaves can be mowed without the catch-bag attachment, leaving the shredded leaves on the lawn. This technique is most effective when a mulching mower is used. With light leaf drop, this is the easiest and most efficient way to manage leaf accumulation. Leaves contain 50 to 80 percent of the nutrients that a plant extracts from the soil and air during the growing season; therefore, you are taking advantage of a natural resource.

Mulching

Mulching is a simple and effective way to recycle leaves and improve your landscape. It reduces evaporation from the soil surface, inhibits weed growth, moderates soil temperatures, keeps soils from eroding and crusting, and prevents soil compaction. As organic mulch decomposes, valuable nutrients are released for use by plants. Leaves can be used as mulch in vegetable gardens, flowerbeds, and around shrubs and trees.

As an option to raking, a lawnmower with the catch-bag attachment provides a fast and easy way to shred and collect the leaves. Leaves that have been mowed or run through a shredder will decompose faster and are more likely to remain in place than unshredded leaves.



CRIME PREVENTION SAFETY TIPS

When you are at home...

- Replace or rekey all locks when you move into a new home or apartment.
- Install one-inch case hardened steel deadbolt locks on all exterior doors.
- Keep windows and doors locked at all times.
- Install a 190-degree door viewer or door scope in your front door. Look before opening your door to anyone.
- Require identification from all repair persons or public service individuals without opening the door.
- If a prowler enters your home, GET OUT!! Go to a neighbor and call the police.
- If you come home and you think someone is in your home, DO NOT ENTER!! Go to a neighbor and call the police.

When you are walking...

- Always be aware of your surroundings, and the people who are around you.
- Avoid walking alone; either walk with someone, or walk in areas where others are near.
- Stay in well lighted areas, away from alleys, bushes, and doorways.
- If the driver of a car stops and harasses you, walk in the opposite direction.
- If you are walking to your car in a parking lot, and anything makes you feel uncomfortable, TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS, go back in the store. Get someone to walk with you to your car.
- When you approach your car, check the back seat and under the car.
- Have your keys in your hand. Enter the car, lock the doors, and drive away.
- If you have a cell phone, carry it with you when walking or driving and be prepared to use it to call for help. Know what numbers to call and be prepared to give your exact location to the emergency operator.

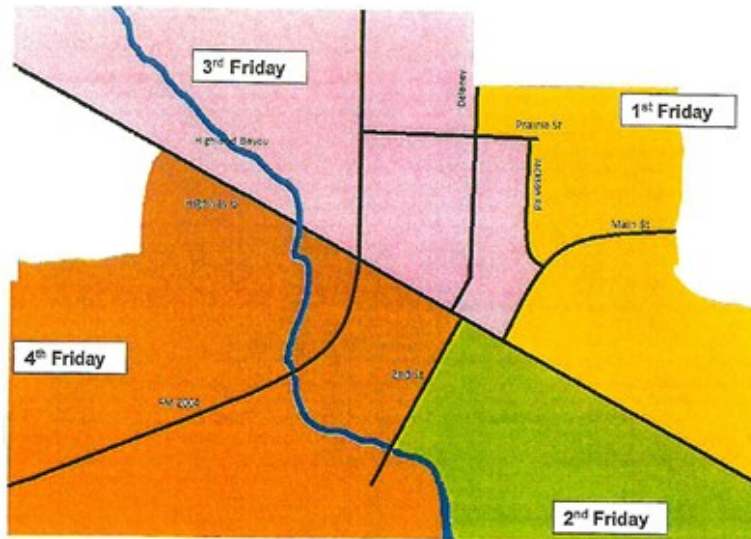
When you are driving...

- Never pick up hitchhikers.
- Keep the car doors locked and the windows rolled up at all times.
- Keep your car properly maintained and be sure you have enough fuel.
- Leave enough space from the car in front of you to maneuver.
- Look for pedestrians, many carjackers approach on foot.
- If you feel you are being followed, DO NOT GO HOME!! Go to an open business, a Police Station or Fire Station to get help.
- Try to park your car in well lighted areas, as close to the door as possible.
- Avoid drive through ATMs at night after the banks are closed.
- Carry and be prepared to use your cell phone.

AMERIWASTE BRUSH GUIDELINES

Brush needs to be in bundles no longer than 4ft and not weighing more than 50 lbs.
 Brush may be placed in cans or bags not weighing more than 50 lbs.
 Bundles are included in the maximum 6 item limit.
 Unbundled brush will be picked up by zone every Friday.
 Do not place brush under utility lines or in ditches.
 Do not put out brush prior to your scheduled week.

For construction debris and furniture contact AmeriWaste at (281) 331-8400 for pick up and pricing.
 Reminder all waste must be in bags, cans, or bundles for normal pickup.



HOW TO CONTACT US

NAME	TITLE	E-MAIL	PHONE NUMBER
RANDY STRICKLIND	MAYOR	rstricklind@cityofhitchcock.org	(409)927-0058
MARY COMBS DEMBY	CITY COUNCIL MEMBER, DISTRICT 1	district1@cityofhitchcock.org	(409)502-0424
CHRIS ARMACOST	CITY COUNCIL MEMBER, DISTRICT 2	district2@cityofhitchcock.org	(409)519-9646
Wayne Newton	CITY COUNCIL MEMBER, DISTRICT 3	district3@cityofhitchcock.org	(409)770-3297
ANDRE PERKINS	CITY COUNCIL MEMBER, DISTRICT 4	district4@cityofhitchcock.org	(409) 739-1375
MARIE GELLES	CITY MANAGER	mgelles@cityofhitchcock.org	(409)986-5591
WILMON SMITH	CHIEF OF POLICE	wsmith@hitchcockpd.com	(409)986-5559
RUTH ANN SORRELL	CITY SECRETARY/COURT CLERK	rsorrell@cityofhitchcock.org	(409)986-5591
CANDIE SERNA	CODE COMPLIANCE OFFICIAL	cserna@hitchcockpd.com	(409)986-5591
NATALIE WILSON	ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATOR	nwilson@hitchcockpd.com	(409)750-1517
FRED WELCH	INTERIM EXEC. DIRECTOR OF HEDC	hedc@cityofhitchcock.org	(409)502-7331
HENRY DEBORD	BUILDING INSPECTOR	inspector@cityofhitchcock.org	(409) 739-0822
HEATHER HEBERT	PERMIT CLERK	hhebert@cityofhitchcock.org	(409) 986-5591
ANDY JENKINS	STREET SUPERVISOR	anthonyjenkins47@icloud.com	(409)986-5591
LEROY THOMAS	WATER/WASTEWATER SUPERINTENDENT	lthomas@cityofhitchcock.org	(409)761-0737
MIGUEL DELGADO	INTERIM WWTP OPERATOR		(409)986-5591
FIRE MARSHALL	DARRON RAY	fire@cityofhitchcock.org	(409) 457-6258
ANIMAL CONTROL			(409) 948-2485
MOSQUITO CONTROL			(281) 337-4289
GARBAGE COLLECTION	AMERIWASTE		(281) 331-8400
AFTER HOUR WATER/ SEWER/WWTP			(409)795-7595
NON EMERGENCY POLICE			(409)986-5559