



High Water Usage Resulting in Increased Billing

August 2020

Below are some common causes we have seen and experienced while our operators go out to inspect the high water bill issues in our City:

- A leaking toilet or a toilet that continues to run after being flushed (see additional information below).
- 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.
- Watering the lawn, new grass, or trees; also check for an open hose spigots.
- Watering on a daily basis, please follow the watering schedule.
- Kids' home because of COVID-19, summer vacations or school holidays; guests.
- Water-cooled air conditioners.
- A broken water pipe or obvious leak; check the pipes, the water heater could also be leaking.

Learning how to save water at home is very important, the largest water users are the toilets, clothes washer and showers, accounting for about two-thirds of the water used in an average household. Typically water consumption is higher during the summer due to watering of lawns, pools, and gardening.

Things to check if you get a bill that's higher than usual:

Changes in your water use - Did you have house guests, water your lawn more than usual, or do anything else out of the ordinary? A lot of the times your lawn contractor will change your timer to water on a daily basis which will result in a high water bill.

Check for leaks - 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. This is very common in our City of Fowler and it accounts for about two thirds of the total complaints.

Outdoor and underground leaks - Leaks can also occur in harder to find places, such as under your home, crawl spaces. Also, check outdoor spigots and irrigation systems, and look for wet spots in your yard, which may indicate a leak.

Toilet and faucet leaks – A typical common cause for a high water bill is running water from your toilet. A continuously running toilet can waste up to 200 gallons a day or more depending on the volume flow down the drain. This can cause a terrible increase to a family's typical water use, so fix toilet leaks as soon as possible. Some leaks are easy to find, such as a dripping faucet or running toilet. You can usually hear a running toilet, but not always.

Do-it-yourself Toilet Assessment - First check for the most common leak: a deteriorated or defected flush valve (flapper) ball at the bottom of the toilet tank. If it does not make a tight seal water will leak into the toilet bowl. To check for a leaky toilet follow steps 1 thru 4:

1. Take the lid off of the tank behind the bowl, flush the toilet, and then wait for it to fully refill.
2. Put a few drops of dye or a colored dye tablet (food coloring works well) in the tank.
3. Wait at least 20 minutes; longer if you suspect it is a small leak.
4. If there is any color in the toilet bowl, there is a leak.

The second most common type of leak has to do with an improperly adjusted or broken fill (ballcock) valve. To check for this take the lid off of the toilet tank, flush, and see if water is draining into the overflow tubes when the tank is full.

Irrigation Systems - During the summer irrigation systems are a common source of high water use. Watering times generally double during the summer months compared to the winter. Automated irrigation systems should be checked regularly to be sure they are functioning properly and have no leaks or broken sprinkler heads. If a sprinkler valve sticks on, it could waste an extremely large quantity of water. The irrigation timer may not be programmed properly; i.e., sprinklers are watering too often and/or for too long. Reprogramming may be necessary if the power has been off (we have experienced this recently) which tends to reset timers.

After our water operators perform the inspection and go through their steps in determining if there is a leak in the property and there is no leak, and/or if the meter reading is checked and found to be accurate; you may need to contact a plumber or other professional to help determine the source of the problem. Property owners are responsible for all private service water lines from the public water meter to the residence and for leaks inside the home.

After troubleshooting these common causes and none apply to the issue, please contact my office at 559-834-3113, extension 121 and leave a detailed message, or you can email me directly at ddominguez@ci.fowler.ca.us

The following table shows the amount of water that can be lost (and billed to your account) for various size leaks:

Leak Size	Gallons Per Day	Gallons Per Month
A dripping leak consumes:	15 gallons	450 gallons
A 1/32 inch leak consumes:	264 gallons	7,920 gallons
A 1/16 inch leak consumes:	934 gallons	28,300 gallons
A 1/8 inch leak consumes:	3,806 gallons	114,200 gallons
A 1/4 inch leak consumes:	15,226 gallons	456,800 gallons
A 1/2 inch leak consumes:	60,900 gallons	1,827,000 gallons

Sincerely,

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