High Water Bill?

If you receive a bill that seems high we strongly encourage you to look for a leak. A leak does not necessarily mean that there will be water on the floor or something you can hear. Most leaks go undetected and can end up costing hundreds of dollars to a single water bill. The following are common causes that may help you pinpoint the source of a high bill:

- A leaking toilet, or a toilet that continues to run after being flushed (see Toilet Assessment on the next page).
- A dripping faucet; a faucet drip can waste 20 gallons of water a day or more.
- Water softener problems – cycles continuously.
- A broken water pipe or obvious leak. Check the pipes in the basement or crawlspace. Check your water heater for any signs of a leak.
- Check under your house or in the service line between your water meter and your home; look for wet spots in your yard, all may indicate a possible leak.
- Filling or topping off a swimming pool.
- Watering the lawn, new grass, or trees; also check for an open hose bib.
- Kids home for summer vacations or school holidays; house guests.
- Water-cooled air conditioners.
- Did you do anything out of the ordinary in the last month that uses a good amount of water?

Generally, water consumption is higher during the summer due to watering of lawns, pools, and gardening. Typically, an average family of four uses 4000-5000 gallons of water a month.

The Cost of an unrepaired leak can be costly as shown in the following table:

Leak Size		Gallons Per Day	Gallons Per Month	Cubic Feet per Quarter
	A dripping leak consumes:	15 gallons	450 gallons	180 Cubic Feet
	A 1/32 in. leak consumes:	264 gallons	7,920 gallons	3,168 Cubic feet
	A 1/16 in. leak consumes:	943 gallons	28,300 gallons	11,319 Cubic Feet
	A 1/8 in. leak consumes:	3,806 gallons	114,200 gallons	45,681 Cubic Feet
	A 1/4 in. leak consumes:	15,226 gallons	456,800 gallons	182,721 Cubic feet
	A 1/2 in. leak consumes:	60,900 gallons	1,827,000 gallons	730,800 Cubic Feet

Toilet Assessment

Leaking toilets are the number one source of wasted water in the home. A leaky toilet tank wastes between 300 gallons (slow leak) and 60,000 gallons (running toilet) per month. To safeguard against this problem, it is highly recommended that you perform this test at least twice a year. Catching a toilet leak at its earliest stage can save a lot of water from being wasted as well as money on your water bill each month. To detect a slow leak:

1. Remove tank lid
2. Put 10-15 drops of food coloring or a dye tablet in the toilet tank
3. Wait 30 minutes without flushing
4. After 30 minutes, if the water in the bowl turns color, your toilet tank is leaking

Replace the parts inside your toilet tank. Repair kits are inexpensive and are available at most hardware and home improvement stores

Flapper Valve Leaks

The most common reason for a leaking toilet is one that has an improperly working or sealing flapper. The flapper is the rubber valve in the bottom of the tank that lifts up when the toilet is flushed. If the flapper is worn or cracked, it allows water to continuously flow from the tank into the toilet bowl without flushing.

Flush Handle Problems

If the handle needs to be jiggled to keep the toilet from running, the flush level bar and chain (or the handle itself) may be sticking. Adjust the nut that secures it in the toilet tank. If that does not work, the handle may have to be replaced.

Overflow Tube Leaks

Ideally the water level should be set so that it is about even with the fill line on the back of the toilet tank (approximately ½ inch below the overflow tube). If the water is too high in the toilet tank and is spilling into the overflow tube, the water level can be adjusted by turning the adjustment screw or by very gently bending the float arm down so that the water shuts off at a level below the overflow tube.