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Why is My Water Bill So High?

Tips for Finding Leaks & Water Conservation

Often our customers ask us, "Why is my water bill so high?" There are two reasons why a customer's bill would increase. Either there is a leak in the water lines somewhere or excessive use of the water. If your water bill is higher than what you are comfortable with, this booklet provides information and tips to help.

Why is water conservation so important? Like many things around us, we seldom appreciate what is plentiful and easy to obtain. And what could be more plentiful than water? To get water, all we do is just turn on the faucet 24 hours a day and its there, ready to use. But think again -- the water we use doesn't just magically appear. Treated water is a carefully manufactured product, which appears in your home only after traveling through many miles of pipeline and lengthy treatment processes. It's a valuable resource that shouldn't be wasted.

Just 1% of the entire water supply in the world is available for human use -- the rest is salty or locked in ice caps and glaciers. This relatively small 1% keeps all the world's agricultural, manufacturing, community and personal household and sanitation needs operating. We actually drink very little of our processed "drinking water"; around 1% of all treated water. The rest goes on lawns, in washing machines, and down toilets and drains!

Total water use (both indoor and outdoor) in a typical single-family home is 101 gallons per person per day.

Typically, households consume approximately 30% of their water for outdoor use, such as watering the lawn. Inside, toilets use the most water, with an average of 27 gallons per person per day. The average five-minute shower takes between 15 to 25 gallons of water.

Duplin County is a growing community. Increased growth in the community increases the demands on the water system. As a consumer, you can do your part to conserve precious water supplies through small, thoughtful changes in your lifestyle and activities.

Do you have a leak? To establish if you have a leak, you must know how to read your meter. The first step is to locate your water meter. The meter is usually located in your front yard near the road. It is in a black meter box, even with the ground. Open the lid, and inside you should see a cap with a serial number on it. Under that cap is where you will see your meter reading.

Water meters are read like the odometer in your car. Every gallon of water that flows through the meter is recorded. Under the reading, you will see a red triangle. This is called a drip gauge. If water is flowing through the meter, the drip gauge will be turning. The faster water flows the faster the drip gauge will be turning. If you know that you are not using any water in your home, and your drip gauge is turning, this will confirm that you have a leak somewhere.

If the leak is a small one, the drip gauge will be turning very slowly. In this case, you can set aside a period of time when you will not be using any water, one or two hours should be sufficient. Read the last number on the meter, wait for awhile, and read the last number again. The number should be the same if you have not used any water.

How do I find the leak? If you have determined that you have a leak, your next step is to locate the leak. If you have a cut off valve at your house, it will make finding it a little easier.

Go turn off the valve at your house. Go back to check the meter again. If the drip gauge is still turning, then the leak is not in the house, the leak will be found somewhere in the lines between the meter and the house. If the turning stops after you close the valve at the house, then your leak is somewhere in the house.

Is the leak in the house? If the leak is in your house, you should check your toilet, faucets, washing machine, and any pipes that lead to these items. Toilets are often the problem when the leak is in your home. One method for finding a leak in your toilet is to put some food coloring in the tank. Wait for about 30 minutes; if you see any of the food coloring in the bowl of the toilet, then you may have to replace the flapper inside the tank. *Make sure you do not leave the coloring in your tank longer than necessary because it can stain the porcelain.* You may have to replace the parts inside the tank or simply wiggle the handle after you flush to stop the water flowing through the toilet. You can repair dripping faucets by replacing the washers.

Is the leak outside? If the leak is outside your house, you should follow the water line from the meter to your house, and look for a wet or damp place on the ground. Someone will have to dig up the line and repair the pipe, once you find it. If you feel this job is too much for you to handle on your own, don't hesitate to contact one of the local plumbers. Sometimes, paying a plumber will save you more money in the long run rather than paying for wasted water on your monthly bill.

Conservation Tips: Inside the Home



Store drinking water in the refrigerator. Don't let the tap run while you are waiting for cool water to flow.



Do not use running water to thaw meat or other frozen foods. Defrost food overnight in the refrigerator or use the defrost setting on your microwave.



Insulate your water pipes. You'll get hot water faster, and avoid wasting water waiting for water while it heats up.



Don't let water run while shaving or washing your face. Brush your teeth first while waiting for water to get hot, then wash or shave after filling the basin.



When washing dishes by hand, don't let the water run while rinsing. Fill one sink with wash water and the other with rinse water.



Soak your pots and pans instead of letting the water run while you scrape them clean.



Avoid flushing the toilet unnecessarily. Dispose of tissues, insects and other similar waste in the trash rather than the toilet



Collect the water you use for rinsing produce and reuse it to water houseplants.



Wash clothes only when you have a full load and save up to 600 gallons each month.



Time your shower to keep it under 5 minutes. You'll save up to 1000 gallons a month.



If the toilet handle frequently sticks in the flush position, letting water run constantly, **replace or adjust it.**



Repair dripping faucets by replacing the washers.



Make sure your home is leak-free. How to tell? Check your water meter a few hours before and after during a span of time when you are certain that no water is being used. If the meter reading changed, you know you have a leak!

Conservation Tips: Outside the Home



When washing the car, use soap and water from a bucket. Use a hose with a shut-off nozzle for the final rinse.



Wash your car on the grass. This will water your lawn at the same time.



Always water during the cool time of the day to minimize evaporation. Early morning is best, and the peak water consumption hours (4 p.m. - 9 p.m.) should be avoided.



Aerate your lawn. Punch holes in your lawn about six inches apart so water will reach the roots rather than run off the surface.



Bathe your pets outdoors in an area in need of water.



If you have a pool, use a pool cover to cut down on evaporation. It will also keep your pool cleaner and reduce the need to add chemicals. Saves 1,000 gallons a month.



Don't buy recreational water toys that require a constant flow of water.



When the kids want to cool off, use the sprinkler in an area where your lawn needs it the most.



Minimize evaporation by watering during the early morning hours, when temperatures are cooler and winds are lighter.



Use a layer of organic mulch around plants to reduce evaporation and save hundreds of gallons of water a year.



Water your summer lawns once every three days and your winter lawn once every five days.



Set lawn mower blades one notch higher. Longer grass means less evaporation.

American Water Works Association

The Authoritative Resource on Safe Water

Facts About Water

- 💡 Of all the earth's water, 97% is salt water found in oceans and seas.
- 💡 A person should consume 2 ½ quarts of water per day (from all sources of water, food, etc.) to maintain health.
- 💡 A dairy cow must drink four gallons of water to produce one gallon of milk.
- 💡 An automatic dishwasher uses approximately 9 to 12 gallons of water while hand washing dishes can use up to 20 gallons.
- 💡 The average five-minute shower takes between 15 to 25 gallons of water.
- 💡 Total water use (both indoor and outdoor) in a typical single-family home is 101 gallons per capita per day (gpcpd).
- 💡 You can refill an 8 oz glass of water approximately 15,000 times for the same cost as a six-pack of soda.
- 💡 Only 1% of the earth's water is available for drinking water. Two percent is currently frozen.
- 💡 About two thirds of the human body is water. Some parts of the body contain more water than others. For example, 70% of your skin is water.
- 💡 Typically, households consume approximately 30% of their water for outdoor use, such as watering the lawn. Inside, toilets use the most water, with an average of 27 gallons per person per day.
- 💡 One gallon of water weighs approximately 8 ½ pounds.
- 💡 You can survive about a month without food, but only 5 to 7 days without water.

Potential Contaminant Source

