

## Causes of high water bills not due to leaks

There are other causes of high water bills. Changes in water use, rate increases, increased sewer charges, and line items on your bill can all make a difference.

### Is it a seasonal increase?

Summers are often marked by:

- Washing cars
- Filling pools
- Using water-cooled air conditioning units
- Using pressure washers
- Watering lawns and gardens, new sod and trees
- Housing returned college students
- Having more guests

### Were there more people at home for work/school, spring break, the holidays, or other reasons?

### Was it the first water bill of the new year?

Water and sewer charges often increase annually. If you are using the same amount of water but paying more, was there a rate increase from one bill to the next?

### Are you paying more for sewer charges?

For single and two-family homes, we set sewer use rates in the winter months when use is typically low. That rate is then capped for the rest of the year. You will not be charged for sewer use beyond your cap during that year.

However, if you had a leak during the sewer-setting winter months, your sewer setting rate will be higher than normal, capping your sewer rate at a higher level for the rest of the year.

**Did you incur other charges?** Late fees? Does this bill include a previous balance? Are the charges related to your city services? (Street lights, recycling, etc.)

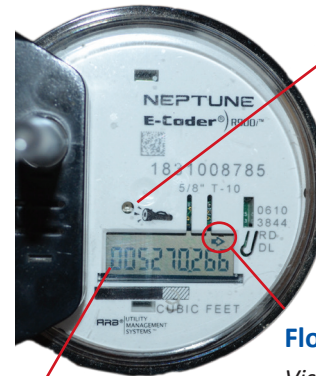
## Locating and reading your water meter

Your meter is located inside your home, about one foot off of the floor in your basement. It could also be in a crawl space, pit in the floor, or utility room.

### Reading Your Meter

*You will need a **flashlight**.*

Your display panel will alternate screens between total water use and rate of flow.



#### Light Sensor

Use a flashlight to turn on the display panel. Shine the light on the flashlight icon, or on some models, the energy cell.

#### Flow Indicator

*Visible only when water is running.*

#### Display Panel

Read all nine numbers from left to right to obtain a water meter reading.

#### Leak Indicator

This indicates a possible leak. It notes that water has been used throughout most of the day. If no leak is detected, the faucet image will not appear.



#### Rate Indicator



"RATE" means the rate of water flowing through your water meter. The rate is measured in cubic feet per minute.

Find out how to use your water meter to detect toilet leaks: [tinyurl.com/waterMeterTest](http://tinyurl.com/waterMeterTest)



## Are water leaks costing you money?



### Finding and fixing leaks in your home

*And identifying other causes of high water bills*

**For more information on finding and fixing leaks, please go to our website at [www.stpaul.gov/water](http://www.stpaul.gov/water)**



1900 Rice Street  
Saint Paul, MN 55113  
(651) 266-6350  
[waterinquiries@stpaul.gov](mailto:waterinquiries@stpaul.gov)

## Toilet leaks are #1

Toilet leaks are the number one cause of high water use within the SPRWS customer service area. These leaks can waste hundreds, even thousands of gallons of water a day.



It can be expensive, as silent toilet leaks—leaks that occur from the tank into the bowl and then into the sewer—often go unnoticed until we read your meter. Your water and sewer bill could double or even triple in a quarterly billing cycle. While toilets are the most likely cause of leaks in the home, they are not the only culprit.

## Other leaks

If you have tested your toilet for leaks, try looking in these other areas:

- Faucets/shower heads
- Bath tubs/laundry room tubs
- Outdoor sprinkler systems
- Outdoor spigots-either dripping or pipe burst due to freeze/thaw
- Whole house humidifiers attached to the furnace
- Water softeners that regenerate constantly
- Hot water heaters

*You may need to call a plumber to help you assess the source of your leak.*

## Finding a toilet leak

1. Take the lid off of your toilet tank.
2. Put a few drops of food coloring or a few dye tablets in to the toilet tank.
3. Stir the water in the tank with a long spoon or stick.
4. Do not flush or use the toilet.
5. Wait at least 25 - 30 minutes for dye tabs; wait an hour if using food coloring.
6. Look in the bowl. If the coloring has seeped from the tank into the bowl, you have a toilet leak.

## Fixing a toilet leak

If the float is not adjusted properly, water can continue to fill into the tank and drain down the overflow tube.

- a. Pull up on the float.
- b. If the water stops running, you might need to adjust the float.

The fill valve/inlet valve is not set properly or has malfunctioned. This sometimes causes a hiss or a squeal when filling.

- a. Try adjusting the fill/inlet valve.
- b. You might need to replace it.

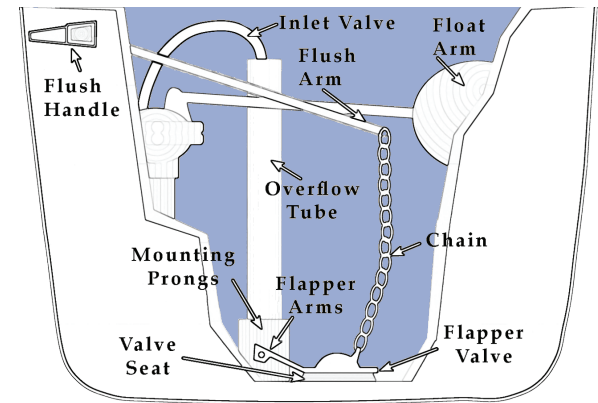
Wearing a disposable glove, touch the flapper at the bottom of the tank. If a black residue rubs off, replace the flapper.

## Do you have to jiggle the handle to make the toilet stop running?

You might need to adjust the chain so that the flapper sits in the valve seat properly.

*The advice listed here is general. SPRWS recommends contacting a licensed plumber for professional advice if you require additional assistance.*

## How to clean debris from the fill/inlet valve



1. Turn off the water supply to the toilet.
2. Remove the top cap from the fill /inlet valve.
3. Remove the loose washers and internal parts from inside the valve.
4. Confirm the seals are in good shape.
5. Place a plastic cup over the center of the fill/inlet valve.
6. Slowly turn the water back on. The water will flow out forcefully through the center of the fill/inlet valve and remove any debris.
7. Turn off the water supply to the toilet.
8. Re-install the fill/inlet valve parts and replace the cap.
9. Turn the water supply on.
10. Check to see if the fill/inlet valve turns off properly when the tank is full.
11. If not, you may need to replace the fill/inlet valve.