

HIGH WATER BILLS: WHAT YOU CAN DO



Have you recently found yourself staring at your water bill in disbelief, thinking, “How could I have used that much water?” An unusually high water bill is most often caused by a leak or change in water use.

WATER LEAK CHECK SERVICE

Customers with unusually high water use can call the Town and schedule a date and time for a leak check. It is mandatory that the customer be home while the Public Works Department observes the water meter. This ensures that all water sources are turned off at the home. If the meter dial is turning during this initial check, you have a leak.

To help isolate where the leak is in the system, you can turn off the main shut off valve inside your home and the Public Works Department can again observe the water meter. If the meter numbers are still turning, you have a leak under- ground in the service line and may have to contact a plumber for repairs. If the meter dial is not turning, you know that the leak is in the household plumbing.

The irrigation system can be checked in a similar manner. If you are present during the leak check, you can turn off the main irrigation shut off valve and the Public Works Department can determine if the leak is in the irrigation system.

When allowed by law, the Town may make adjustments to utility bills for customers who repair leaks promptly. Please see the reverse side for more information.

IF NO LEAK IS DETECTED

If you do not have a water leak but still have concerns about your utility bill, you may request an onsite meter inspection. The Public Works Department will visit the location and:

- ◆ Confirm the meter and transponder numbers match the customer’s account number.
- ◆ Perform these inspection steps in the meter box:
 1. Is low flow indicator turning?
 2. Is there water in the box? If yes, does it impact the bill?
 3. Take a visual reading on the register.

If there is anything indicating there may be a leak, the Utility Billing Department will notify the customer immediately.

POTENTIAL CAUSES OF HIGH WATER BILLS

- ◆ Leaking toilet, or a toilet that continues to run after being flushed.
- ◆ Dripping faucet (indoor or out) or leaking hot water heater.
- ◆ Leak in the automatic irrigation system.
- ◆ Leak in the water service line between the meter and your home.
- ◆ Watering the lawn, new grass, trees; or open hose bib.
- ◆ Change in the number of people in the household (guests, etc.).
- ◆ Caretaker watering the property or changing the irrigation system settings.
- ◆ Automatic devices such as irrigation controllers and water softening systems working improperly.
- ◆ Seasonal change in water use habits.

WATER CONSERVATION TIPS

- ◆ www.TownofSunnyvale.org/conservation

IF NO METER PROBLEMS ARE FOUND

If no leak is found and the on-site meter inspection does not uncover any problems, the customer is responsible for paying the water bill. The Town of Sunnyvale does not require full payment of the bill for properties with unusually high water use until the leak check service and on site meter inspection are complete. If no leak is detected, the customer will have to pay their full amount on the water bill.

UTILITY BILL CREDITS FOR LEAK REPAIRS

If a leak was identified and repaired, you may be eligible for a credit on your utility bill. In general, the following process and criteria are used to determine if a customer will receive a credit.

- ◆ The Town must be notified of the leak for the user to be eligible for a credit (or the Town notifies the water user of the leak).
- ◆ The Town must be notified within 90 days of the leak (three billing cycles) to be eligible for a credit. If the Town notifies the customer of a leak, it must be repaired within 30 days of that notice.
- ◆ If the leak is not repaired during the 30 days following notification, you will not be eligible for a credit.
- ◆ If your leak happens to fall in between two different billing cycles, the Town will only credit one month. (EX: Ms. Smith received her water bill for September and noticed it was \$250, compared to her usual bill of \$150. She pays the bill and waits for the October bill. Ms. Smith receives her October bill and notices it's \$375. She then notifies the Town that she may have a leak on her property. The Public Works Department checks the meter for a leak and notifies Ms. Smith and the Utility billing department of the leak. The Town will only allow one credit, even though Ms. Smith's leak fell in between two months; she will have to choose which month she would like the credit for.)

The leak will be based on your water usage from the same period from the year before.

- ◆ Receipts documenting the repair must be provided.
- ◆ Leak adjustments are only given once every 12 months.

CONTACT INFORMATION

- ◆ Water Leak Checks and Utility Bill Questions - (972) 203-0325 or UB@TownofSunnyvale.org
- ◆ Senior Utility Clerk Mary McGuffey: Mary.McGuffey@TownofSunnyvale.org
- ◆ Utility Clerk Liz Stark: Liz.Stark@TownofSunnyvale.org
- ◆ Emergency: (972) 251-0567



A BREAKDOWN ON YOUR WATER CONSUMPTION

Our current rates come to about \$1.84 per day. That goes a long way, even if you just look at the potable water you get:



The average gallon of bottled water costs \$1.50. Under the current rates, our typical customer will still only pay about one penny per gallon of drinking water!