

THE FACTS ON WATER LEAKS AND EXCESS USAGE

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Leaks can account for, on average, more than 10,000 gallons of water wasted in the home every year, which is enough to fill a backyard swimming pool. The amount of water leaked from U.S. homes could exceed more than 1 trillion gallons per year. That's equivalent to the annual water use of Los Angeles, Chicago, and Miami combined. Ten percent of homes have leaks that waste 90 gallons or more per day. Common types of leaks found in the home include leaking toilet flappers, dripping faucets and other leaking valves. All are easily correctable. Fixing easily corrected household water leaks can save homeowners more than 10 percent on their water bills. Keep your home leak-free by repairing dripping faucets, toilet valves, and showerheads. In most cases, fixture replacement parts don't require a major investment. Toilets account for nearly 30% of indoor water consumption and leaking toilets, sinks and other plumbing fixtures can increase your water bill by more than 34%.

Leak Detection:

- Check your water meter before and after a two-hour period when no water is being used. If the meter does not read exactly the same, you probably have a leak.
- Evaluate exposed pipes under your sinks or vanities, in your basement, crawl space or attic. Look for obvious drips, leaks or signs of leaks such as:
 - Damp, wet areas
 - Rusty pipes
 - Bulging or bowed structures near pipes, indicating water damage
 - Water stains
 - Check less obvious water users, like ice makers, automatic pool refill systems.

Faucets and Showers:

- Showers account for about 20 percent of total indoor water use. The average shower lasts 12 to 15 minutes and uses approximately 150 gallons of water.
- A showerhead leaking at 10 drips per minute wastes more than 500 gallons per year. That's enough water to wash 60 loads of dishes in your dishwasher.
- A leaky faucet that drips at the rate of one drip per second can waste more than 3,000 gallons per year.
- Leaky faucets can be fixed by checking faucet washers and gaskets for wear and replacing them.
- Replace: Standard bathroom faucets use 2.5 gallons of water per minute. If your bathroom is ready for a new look, you may consider installing a new low-flow faucet with an aerator as one way to reduce water use.
- Conserve: Adding a low-volume faucet aerator-which mixes water and air-to an existing faucet can reduce water flow to a more efficient 1.5 gallons per minute. Faucets made over the last 20 years have aerators, but time and use can reduce effectiveness. Replace them if the water flow seems restricted.

Toilets:

- If your toilet is leaking, the cause is most often an old, faulty toilet flapper or flush valve. Over time, these inexpensive rubber parts decay, or minerals build up. It's usually a relatively easy, inexpensive do-it-yourself project that pays for itself in no time. Check for toilet leaks (there are three types)
- **Flapper leak:** Toilet Flappers which connect your holding tank to the toilet bowl deteriorate with age and develop mineral buildup. This can cause a faulty seal and allow water to seep through. A faulty flapper can waste up to 200 gallons of water a day. Add a few drops of food coloring to the holding tank and wait 30 minutes. If you have a leak, the coloring will appear in the water in the bowl. Flush the toilet immediately after this test to prevent the food coloring from staining the tank.
- **Fill-valve leak:** Listen, do you hear water running? With a fill-valve leak, you can hear water running continuously.
- **Flush handle leak:** Over years of use, flush handles can become loose or stuck in the flush position allowing water to seep into the bowl and down the drain.
- **Replace:** Toilets manufactured prior to 1993 use at least 3.5 gallons per flush with some water guzzlers using as much as 7 gallons per flush! Consider replacing older toilets with high-efficiency models that use less than 1.3 gallons per flush. Replacing one toilet can save up to 16,500 gallons of water per year.

Outdoors:

- Lawn irrigation systems make it easy to create beautiful yards. Automated systems are even more convenient. But according to a study by the American Water Works Association, automatic systems use up to 47 percent more water than non automated systems.
- An irrigation system should be checked each spring before use to make sure it was not damaged by frost or freezing.
- An irrigation system that has a leak 1/32nd of an inch in diameter (about the thickness of a dime) can waste about 6,300 gallons of water per month.
- Watering guidelines recommend one inch of water per week delivered in a single application.
- Leaking outdoor spigots and faucets can waste thousands of gallons per year. Make sure to replace faucet gaskets and washers as needed.
- Inspect and replace leaking hose washers.

Swimming Pools:

- Who doesn't like a nice, relaxing dip in the pool? Unfortunately, water usage with a pool doesn't end after you fill it up!
- Pools that are uncovered lose water to evaporation and that water must be replaced. Help maintain the water level by covering the pool during extended periods of non-use and check the pump for leaks on a regular basis.
- When backwashing a pool-a process that can use 180-250 gallons of water-direct water onto the lawn or into landscaping. Water-saving pool filters can reduce the amount of water used during this process.

Water Softener:

- Keep salt filled and monitor to make sure the softener is working properly.
- Salt can "bridge" and form a pocket at the bottom of the tank and allow excess regeneration.

Additional People:

- Parties, gatherings and additional household guests can increase your water usage dramatically.