

Figuring out why
you have such a high water bill
isn't a mystery.

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MAWS
MOBILE AREA WATER & SEWER SYSTEM

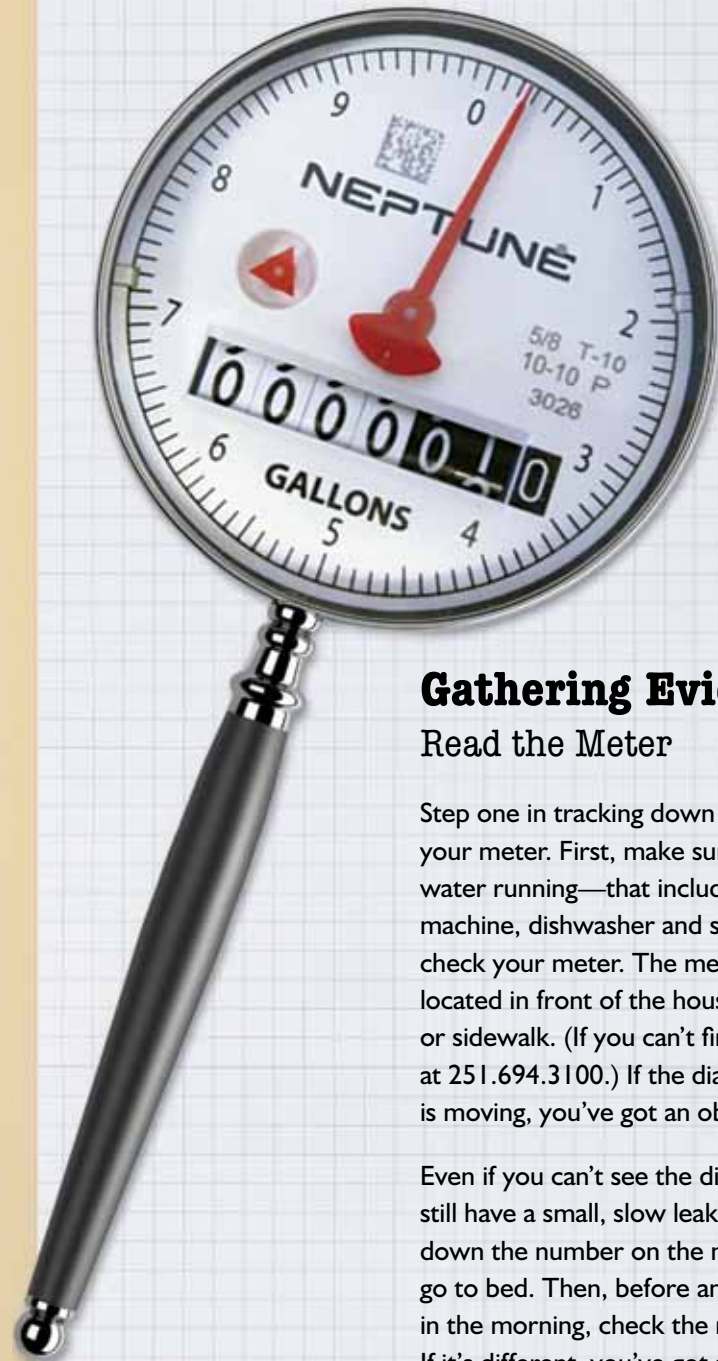


We've documented the most common culprits behind big water bills.

To determine whether or not they're swiping a chunk of your money every month, all you need is a little bit of detective work and a few tools.

If your water bill seems high, there may be a leak.

To figure out if you've got one, you'll need to do a little investigating. And if you have one, we'll tell you how to locate it and what to do about it. Plus, we'll give you some tips about how to lower your bill whether you have a leak or not.



Gathering Evidence

Read the Meter

Step one in tracking down a leak is to read your meter. First, make sure there's no water running—that includes the washing machine, dishwasher and sprinkler—then check your meter. The meter is usually located in front of the house near the curb or sidewalk. (If you can't find it, give us a call at 251.694.3100.) If the dial on the meter is moving, you've got an obvious leak.

Even if you can't see the dial moving, you could still have a small, slow leak. To check, write down the number on the meter before you go to bed. Then, before anyone uses water in the morning, check the number again. If it's different, you've got a water leak.



The Tricky Toilet

Suspect 1

The Tricky Toilet

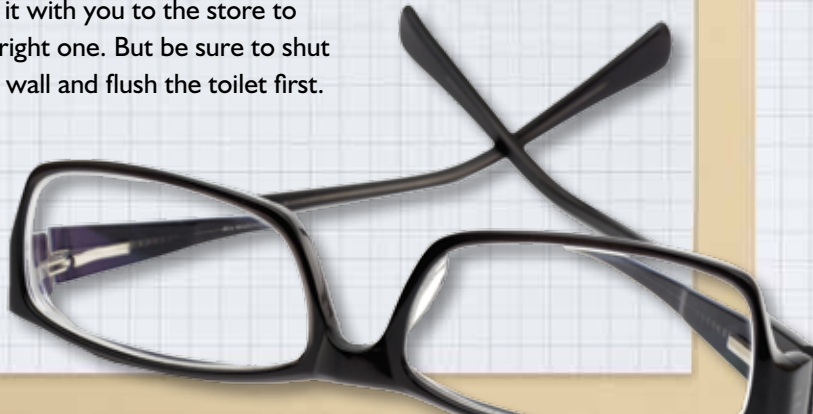
A leaking toilet can waste a lot of water. To test for a leak, wait 5-10 minutes after a flush, then remove the tank top and drop a few drops of food coloring in the tank. **DO NOT FLUSH.** Wait 15-20 minutes. If color appears in the bowl, you have a leak.

Sources of the leak may be:

Stopper Flap This should fit tightly over the hole in the bottom of the tank. If it doesn't, water will constantly run. Buy a new stopper flap and replace, making sure it fits snugly.

The Float The float is the ball that rises as water fills the tank. If the tank is full but your water keeps running, pull up on the float. If the water stops running, you need to adjust the float. Gently bend down the float arm, but take care not to break it. *(Note: In some tanks, the float is on the shaft of the inlet. You can't bend those down.)*

Inlet Valve This lets water into the tank when you flush. If you hear a hiss or a squeal, that means water is still running. Try adjusting the float lower, so the valve shuts off sooner. If that doesn't work, replace the valve. Remove it and take it with you to the store to ensure you get the right one. But be sure to shut off the water at the wall and flush the toilet first.



Suspect 2

The Leaky Faucet

This isn't just one suspect. It's a whole gang of water-wasting villains. You'll find them wherever you turn the water on and off, including washing machine hook-ups.

Check your spouts. If water is dripping when the spout is turned off, you have a bad washer (a small, rubber gasket that looks like an "o"). If water drips at the handle when you turn the water on, you have a different type of bad washer. Replace any bad washers. But before making repairs, turn off the water supply coming to your house.



The Leaky Faucet

Suspect 3 The In-Betweens.

AKA, Hoses and Underground Pipes



The In-Betweens

These are the trickiest leaks of all because they often can't be seen. Check both the connection hoses to your washing machine and the hoses that bring water to your fixtures. Dry the hoses, then wrap a little toilet paper around them. That way, even tiny leaks will be easier to find. Replace any hose that has a hole, remembering to shut off the water supply first.

If you've tried everything else and still have a water leak, it could be underground. Walk around your yard and check for areas that are moist or soft, especially if it hasn't rained recently. A licensed plumber may be needed to find and repair the problem.

It Pays to Prevent

Just like when you're fighting crime, a little prevention will go a long way. So here are a few things you can do to avoid big water bills, regardless of whether or not you have a leak.

Shaving/Brushing Your Teeth

Don't let the water just run. Only turn it on when rinsing.

Toilets Don't use it like a trash can. Only flush when necessary.

Showers Keep your showers short. Bathe small children together in the tub.

Drinking Water Keep a pitcher of water in the refrigerator so you don't have to wait for tap water to get cold.

Cooking Thaw out frozen food in the refrigerator or in a container with just enough water to cover it. Never thaw food under running water.

Washing Dishes Don't run water constantly. Fill up the sink with dishwater. Remove food from plates and let the dishes soak. Same goes with pots and pans. Everything will clean up quicker and you won't have to use as much soap. And, if you have a dishwasher, only use it when it's full.

Laundry Make sure the load selector on your washing machine matches the size of the load, or only wash full loads. Rather than running a longer cycle when clothes are especially dirty, let them soak for a while, then run a normal cycle.

House Cleaning Presoak items like grills and oven racks. Use scouring pads with as little water as you can. And use sponge mops instead of string mops, since they require less water.

Washing Your Car Make sure there's a nozzle on your hose that you can turn off and on so water isn't running all the time. Rinse the car, soap up the car from a bucket of soapy water and rinse again.

Yard Work Use rakes and brooms instead of a hose to clean up yard trash.

Extra Tips for Wintertime and Hard Freezes If your pipes burst, you're responsible.

To help prevent this from happening, disconnect and drain outside hoses. Shut off and drain any irrigation system. Then wrap exposed outside pipes with insulation to protect against the cold. You can find some at your local hardware store, though

newspapers and rags can also work. Inside your house, insulate pipes in unheated areas (crawl spaces, attics, etc.) and leave open cupboard doors in the kitchen and bathroom so warm air can reach the pipes under your sinks. If you're going to be out of town for more than a few days, shut the water off and drain your pipes, but leave your heat on a low setting to keep your pipes from freezing (*NOT recommended if you have an open-flame gas radiant type heater*).

Even with these precautions pipes might freeze, so have the name and number of a licensed plumber in case of emergency. And be sure you know how to shut off the main water valve to your house.

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Now that you've read this brochure, you should have all the info you need to crack the case. But remember, MAWSS is your partner. So if you still have questions or need advice, call us at **251.694.3100**. Together, we'll solve the mystery of the big water bill.



MOBILE AREA WATER & SEWER SYSTEM

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