

How to check for a water leak

Follow these steps to find out if your system has sprung a leak

Finding water leaks can save you water, which means saving money on water and sewer bills. Follow these easy steps to determine if you have a household water leak or a leak in the sprinkler irrigation system.

Step 1. Turn all water-using appliances off so that no water is being used. This means turning off all water inside and outside the house including showers, sinks, washing machines and any appliance that uses water.

Note: If you have an Irrigation system connected to the County’s water system then you will need to include step 2 otherwise go to step 3.

Step 2. If you have a sprinkler irrigation system, turn off the controller and manually shut off the two valves at the double check valve assembly (Backflow Meter) to isolate the irrigation system.



Figure 1 - Backflow

Step 3. Take the lid off the meter box and lift the protective cover carefully to ensure wires do not get detached.



Figure 2 - Meter Lid

Watch the meter. Your meter will have a triangular red or silver and black round disc that is commonly called a “leak indicator.”

- If it is spinning, you have a leak. If there is no indicator and the actual meter dial hand or numbers are moving, water is running somewhere in your system and you have a leak – go to step 4.
- If the hand is not moving, note the position of the hand and write down the reading and wait 30 minutes without using water. Check the meter again, if it has moved, you have a slow leak - go to step 4. If not, you do not have a leak.



Figure 3 - Meter

Step 4. Locate the main shut-off valve to the house (if you have one). This is usually located close to the meter box or up next to the house. The location of your personal shutoff valve is unknown to the County.



Figure 4 – New Omni Meter

Step 5. Turn off the valve.

Step 6. Turn on a faucet inside the house to test.



Figure 5 – Main Shut Off Valve

If water still flows from the faucet after several seconds, the shut off valve is not working. If no water flows through the faucet, the shut off valve is working. Return to the meter.

Step 7. Check if the meter’s leak indicators hand is moving.

- If the leak indicator or dial hand is still moving, water is flowing between the meter and the shut-off valve. That means you have a leak between the meter and the customer-side shut-off valve.
- If it is not moving, then you have a leak between the customer-side shut-off valve and possibly somewhere in the house. Check toilets, washing machines, faucets, etc., for any leak.

Step 8. To check a toilet for a leak add 2 or 3 drops of food coloring to the water in the reservoir.

Wait 15 to 30 minutes. If the water in the bowl changes color, the flapper valve needs to be replaced. For a possible slower (silent) leak, you will want to check after an hour or longer.



Figure 6 – Back of toilet with Dye



Figure 7 – Dye leaking into bowl

Step 9. If you have an irrigation system connected to the County system and did not find the leak between the meter and shut-off valve and inside the house, then the leak could be in the irrigation system.