

County of Henrico Department of Public Utilities

What to do if you have a high water bill?



Overview of DPU

Henrico County's Department of Public Utilities provides water and sewer services to approximately 100,000 customers. Because water is a precious resource and clean water is essential to quality of life, Henrico County is committed to conserving water and preventing loss. Early de-

Who is Responsible?

The Department of Public Utilities is responsible for repairing leaks on the street side of the meter box and inside the meter box. When a customer connects to the public water system, a plumber makes a connection to the meter on the house side of the meter box.

Leaks at the plumber's connection, the service line to the house and all household plumbing are

Signs of a Water Leak

Customers may recognize a water leak during their normal daily activities such as a running toilet or dripping faucets. Signs such as standing water in the yard or water in or around the meter box could also indicate the presence of a leak. A higher than normal bill with increased water usage

Detecting a Water Leak

The first step in locating a leak is to check your water meter. To get a proper test, ensure that there is no water running in your home. This means that no faucets or showers are running, no toilets are being flushed and no dishwasher or washing machine is in use.

Locate the meter box in your yard and remove the lid so that the water meter is accessible. Open

the cover over the meter's dial. There is a leak detector built into the dial of each meter that shows whenever water is passing through the meter. With no water being used, this detector should not be moving.

The county has three different meter types. Each of them have a leak detector. Determine the type of meter you have and below will explain the leak detector.

Elster Mechanical Meter:



The white triangle in the middle of the meter is the leak detector. If the triangle is rotating when water is flowing through the meter.

Badger Mechanical Meter:

The blue circle is the leak detector. If the blue circle is rotating when water is flowing through the meter.



Badger Digital Meter:

The dripping faucet

indicates water is flowing through the meter for 24 hours without one 15-minute interval of no

a faucet and look at the meter. This way you will be able to see the leak indicator in motion. Once the faucet is turned off, motion of the detector should stop.

If water loss is intermittent, however, such as a toilet tank that leaks slowly and refills itself only when the water drops to a certain level, the leak detector may not be effective. In this situation, recording meter readings can help. If there is a time period when you know that no water should be used (for example being at work during the day or away from the house for any other reason), the reading on the meter dial should not advance. Recording the meter reading before you leave and comparing it to a second reading recorded as soon as you return home, before water is used again, will tell you if there was water loss while there you were away.

If you determine that there is a leak, you must then determine if it is inside the house or underground in the line bringing water from the meter to the house. This can be done by locating the main shutoff valve at the house. These valves are usually located in the crawl space, garage or utility room. Closing this valve will stop all wa-

Leaks Within Your Home

Faucets and toilets are often the leaking culprits within the home. A faucet leak is usually due to old or broken interior parts of the valve. Replacement of washers and valves may take care of the leak. These parts can be obtained from your local hardware store.

A leaking toilet is the most overlooked and costly type of water leak because it may not be obvious. Toilet leaks can range from small to large, constant to random and silent to being heard. The

flapper or an improperly adjusted or broken fill valve (ball cock) are the main problems and can easily be fixed with replacement parts found at the hardware store.

To help determine if you have a leaking toilet, simply remove the tank lid and put enough cola to discolor the water in the back of the toilet tank, wait about 30 minutes, do not flush, and then look in the toilet bowl to see if any cola has seeped through. If the water is clear, then water is not leaking. If you see cola in the bowl, then you have a leak.

In most cases, you will simply need to replace

Leaks Outside Your Home

Irrigation systems or leaky water spigots are often the causes of leaks outside your home. Irrigation systems should be checked each spring before use to make sure no damage was caused by frost or freezing. Outside spigots and hose connections should also be checked.

1. Look (and feel) for portions of your property that are always wet or where there is water pooling on the ground or other surfaces.
2. Look at your driveway, curb or street for evidence of water flow. The evidence may not be a steady stream of water; it may be a puddle that never dries up, or a darker spot (as in what happens when water is spilt on dry concrete) or cracking of paved areas, sink holes or pot holes.

Finding Other Water Leaks

Be aware that the exact location of a leak may not always be immediately obvious. Some leaks may start at one location, then flow along a ledge or other channel for a distance before they drain down and create some visible damage.

Look for wet, warped or discoloration stains on your ceilings, floors, walls and woodwork (such as the bottom of your kitchen or bathroom sink cabinet). As you attempt to repair, be sure to check twice for the actual location of the leak, not just the resulting damage from the leak.

Condensation can also be a form of water leak. While condensation is normal, excessive condensation can cause damage to your walls, ceilings, floors and woodwork. If there is too much con-

Other Reasons for High Bills

A change in your water use pattern. This is the most common reason for high water consumption. Frequent visitors, new appliances or regular lawn or garden irrigation can greatly affect your bill.

More accurate readings due to a new meter. Water meters may run slow as they age. This will cause your water consumption to show a decrease over time. As a result, when older meters are replaced with newer ones, bills may show higher water consumption due to increased accuracy of usage

Henrico County Department of Public Utilities
4301 E. Parham Road, Henrico, VA 23228

Phone: (804) 501-4275
Email: utilities@henrico.us
www.henrico.us/utility

Mail to: PO Box 90775, Henrico, VA 23273-0775