



Water & Sewer Department
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Potential Causes of High Water/Sewer Bills

An unusually high water bill is most often caused by a leak or change in water use. Some common causes of high water bills include:

- A leaking toilet, or a toilet that continues to run after being flushed (see additional information below)
- A dripping faucet; a faucet drip can waste 20 gallons of water a day or more
- Filling or topping off a swimming pool
- Watering the lawn, new grass, or trees; also check for an open hose bib
- Kids home for summer vacations or school holidays; guests
- Water-cooled air conditioner's
- A broken water pipe or obvious leak; check the pipes in the basement or crawlspace; the water heater could also be leaking
- Water softener problems-cycles continuously
- Running the water to avoid freezing water pipes during cold weather

Generally, water consumption is higher during the summer due to watering of lawns, pools, and gardening. Typically, an average family of four uses 4000-5000 gallons of water a month. Here are a few things to check if you get a bill that is higher than usual.

Changes in your water use

Did you have house guests, water your lawn more than usual, or do anything else out of the ordinary in the last few months that would use a lot of water? If so, this may account for an increase in your water/sewer bill.

Check for leaks

Leaks, whether unseen or unfixed, can and will waste hundreds and even thousands of gallons of water. It is important to routinely check your plumbing and home for leaky faucets, toilets, and outside taps and irrigation lines.

Toilets and faucet leaks

The most common cause for a high water/sewer bill is running water from your toilet. A "continuously" running toilet can waste 200 gallons a day or in some cases much more. That can easily double a family's typical water use, so fix toilet leaks as soon as possible. Some leaks are easy to find, such a

dripping faucet or running toilet. You can usually hear a running toilet, but not always. See the toilet assessment below for help in determining if this is the cause of your high water bill.

Do-It-Yourself Toilet Assessment

First check for the most common leak: a deteriorated or defected flush valve (flapper) ball at the bottom of the toilet tank. If it does not make a tight seal, water will leak into the toilet bowl. To check for this:

- Take the lid off of the tank behind the bowl, flush the toilet, then wait for it to fully refill
- Put a few drops of dye or colored dye tablets (available at local hardware store) in the tank
- Wait 20 minutes; longer if you suspect it is a small leak
- If color shows up in the toilet bowl, there is a leak

The second most common type of leak has to do with an improperly adjusted or broken fill valve. To check for this take the lid off the toilet tank, flush, and see if water is draining into the overflow tubes when the tank is full.

The following tables shows the amount of water that can be lost (and billed to your account) for various size leaks.

Leak Size		Gallons Per Day	Gallons Per Month	Cubic Feet Per Quarter	Water & Sewer Cost Per Quarter FY23
...	Dripping Leak	15	450	180	\$ 30.55
.	1/32" leak	264	7,920	3,176	\$ 539.03
.	1/16" Leak	943	28,290	11,346	\$ 1,925.64
•	1/8" Leak	3,806	114,180	45,794	\$ 7,772.16
•	1/4" Leak	15,226	456,780	183,200	\$ 31,092.70

Outdoor and underground leaks

Leaks can also occur in harder to find places, such as under your house or in the service line between your water meter and your home. Check outdoor spigots and crawl spaces, and look for wet spots in your yard, which may indicate a leak.

Irrigation Systems

During summer months, irrigation systems are a common source of high water use. Watering times generally double during the summer months compared to the spring or fall. Automated irrigation

systems should be checked regularly to be sure they are functioning properly and have no leaks or broken sprinkler heads. If a sprinkler valve sticks on, it could waste an extremely large quantity of water. The irrigation timer may not work or may not be programmed properly; i.e., sprinklers are watering too often and/ or for too long. Reprogramming may be necessary if the power has been off.

What Can I Do if My Bill is Unusually High?

If you feel your bill is too high, check the common causes listed above. This may help pinpoint the source of the high bill. Water Department staff are available to recheck a meter reading if you feel there is an error. If the meter reading is checked and found to be accurate, you may need to contact a licensed plumber or other professional to help determine the source of a leak or high bill. Property owners are responsible for all private water service lines from the curb-stop into the residence and for leaks inside the home. If a toilet leaks and the water enters the municipal sewer system you are responsible for the water/sewer bill.

Other helpful self-management tools!

Webster water customers with the new water meter can monitor their own water usage data through a customer web portal. The customer web portal can be accessed here: <https://websterma.my360-app.com>

Please note you are responsible to monitor your own water usage and if you have concerns about excessive usage and or leaks please visit our website for helpful tips and information here: <https://www.webster-ma.gov/402/Leaks>