

## *Water Meter Basics – Meter reading and leak detection*

### Calculating Water Use

Wondering how much water you use to water the lawn each day? Check the meter. Do you want to know how much water you use to do laundry? Again, you can use your water meter to find the answer. All that is required to find the answers to these questions is the ability to read the numbers from an odometer-like display and some simple math skills. And if you're wondering if you might have a leak somewhere, your water meter can help you with that too.

For residential customers, your water meter displays water consumption down to a tenth of a gallon, providing you with some very accurate and useful information. Calculating the amount you're using can be as simple as writing down the numbers from the readout before and after an activity, and then subtracting.

Your water meter is typically located in the ground, along property lines, and near the street (or sidewalk). Once the meter box lid has been removed, you will want to make sure you are looking at the correct meter. You want to match the meter number on your water bill with the meter number on the meter lid. Once you're sure you're looking at the correct meter, you're ready to write down the beginning read. From the odometer-like readout, write down the numbers from left to right, taking note that some of the numbers have a white background and some of the numbers have a black background. When you get to the last digit on the right (a zero), upon close inspection you will notice that the number does not roll over like the higher place digits do. That's because this zero is just a placeholder, and the sweep hand on the face of the dial indicates which number to write instead. So if the sweep hand is pointing at the "2" on the face of the dial, then the last digit on the readout would be written "2". If the sweep hand is pointing at the "3", the last digit of the readout would be written "3". The hash marks on the dial are incremented in tenths of a gallon, so if the sweep hand is somewhere in between the "2" and the "3", you simply count the number of hash marks, add a decimal point after the "2", and write down the number of tenths. Confused yet? Let's look at an actual meter for practice.



The meter number is located  
on the lid of the meter

Below is a sample of a meter that may be at your property.

For the meter below, the reading is **18.3 gallons**.

If you are comparing the meter reading listed on your bill to the actual numbers on the dial, you may be wondering why the bill has fewer digits listed. That's because you are only billed for each 1000 gallons of use. The numbers on the dial with a white background indicate 1000's of gallons. The numbers with a black background indicate hundreds, tens, and single digits are listed around the outer edge in blue. For the purposes of billing, only the white digits are read and recorded on your statement. However, if you are calculating usage, you will want to use the full meter reading.



READING

SWEEP  
HAND

LEAK  
INDICATOR



## Leak Detection

The placement and shape of the leak indicator on your meter will vary depending on the manufacturer. Some leak indicators will appear as a small red triangle. You can identify your leak indicator by turning on an outside hose bib and you will see the indicator spinning.

If your meter's leak indicator is moving and you are certain that all the water is turned off both inside and outside the home, you have a leak.

The leak indicator is designed to aid in the detection of small amounts of water flow through the meter, such as might be seen with leaking faucets, toilets, or irrigation valves.

These continuous, small volume leaks can add up to significant and costly water waste over the length of a couple months or a year, and often going undetected until a homeowner receives an elevated water bill.

As a precaution against a false indication of a leak, ensure that no scheduled irrigation is running due to an automatic timer, that automatic icemakers are off, and that no water softening systems are recharging.

If movement on the meter is still detected following a thorough check of the premises, then further investigation is warranted and you may need to contact a plumber to assist with repairs.