

**Valley Water District**  
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### **GENERAL METER INFORMATION**

Meters used by Valley Water District measure water by cubic feet (1 c.f. = 7.48 gallons). Meters are located in a meter box in the ground, usually at a front corner of your lot. If you are not sure which meter serves your residence, turn on a tap at your residence and see which meter has dials turning. The usage on each bill is for the two preceding months. Because of the two-month cycle, charges for higher summer usage may appear on billings sent after the rainy fall weather has begun. Most accounts have higher usage for the summer months, even with little or no outside watering. We can compare current usage to what is typical water use for your household for that time of year.

### **POSSIBLE CAUSES FOR HIGH BILLING**

High water usage can have a variety of causes: outdoor watering, additional household members, a misread number, a tap left running, or a leak. Malfunctioning meters do happen but are extremely rare. See below for details:

- **MISREAD:** If you suspect your meter has been misread, it can be easily checked. Compare the present reading on your bill to the reading on your meter. If the number on your meter is smaller than the reading on your statement, the meter has been misread. Call us and we will send the crew out to correct our records, and the office will make an adjustment. If the reading on your meter is larger than the present reading on the statement, the reading is accurate. Call us if you have questions regarding this procedure.
  
- **LEAK:** To verify the presence of a leak, note the reading on your meter. Use no water for 30 to 45 minutes and take another reading. If you have used no water, the numbers should not change. If they have changed, water is going through the meter indicating a leak in your service line. (Leak usage caused by an occasional leak, say a toilet running occasionally, may require a reading where there will be no usage for a longer period of time, perhaps overnight or when no one would be at the residence for a number of days. It is not unusual for a meter dial to bounce slightly, indicating small fluctuations of pressure in the water main.

Once you determine a leak is present, the next step is to locate the leak so it can be repaired. This can be as simple as finding a leak in a fixture or a wet spot on the ground that is soft or stays wet even in dry weather. If there is no visible evidence of a leak, you need to determine whether the leak is under the house or in the line between the house and the meter.

First, locate the shut off valve where the water supply enters the building. If there is no valve, you may be able to pinch off the line or install a valve. Once the flow to the house has been stopped, continued usage means the leak is between the meter and the house. If usage stops registering, the leak is under the house, then you should check for leaking fixtures and/or wet spots under the building. Leaks can also occur in the plumbing in the walls.

If the dials continue to turn when the water is turned off at the house, the leak is somewhere between the meter and the house. Here it will help if you know the route of your service line. You can dig midway in the line and shut off or pinch off the line. If the meter continues to run, the leak is between that mid point and the house. By this process, you can narrow down the location of the leak without digging the entire length of the line.

Leaks often develop where two pieces of pipe are joined together because of a possible weakness at a clamp. Leaks in lines running under paving, structures, or landscaping often do not appear at the surface. It can sometimes be more cost effective to install a new line than to locate or dig under the pavement.

**NOTE:** The water service line was installed by a private party. We have no records showing the location of your line and cannot repair lines on private property. We do not have equipment that locates underground water leaks. The private line is not regulated or inspected by Valley Water District.

## REPAIR OF A SERVICE LINE LEAK

Once the leak is located, leaks can be repaired by the customer or their plumber. No matter what material water service lines are made of, after they have been in the ground a number of years they can become brittle and more easily damaged by tree roots, rocks, or driving over the line. Generally speaking, leaks are an indication a pipe has deteriorated to the point where you can expect continued problems.

- **BEFORE YOU DIG:** Call the Utilities Underground Location Service at 1-800-424-5555. There is no charge to you. All public utility lines in the excavation area will be located. If you hit a line and have not called for a locate, the cost of repair will be your responsibility.

*When installing a new service line, we suggest the following guidelines:*

1. Bury the line at least two feet below the ground surface to avoid the possibility of freezing.
2. Place the line in a conduit in areas where future excavation for repair would be a problem.
3. Use 200 psi poly pipe equivalent or better.
4. Make a map of the line location and/or place a line of metal wire in the ditch with the new line to assist in future locating.
5. Place a shut off valve both where the plumbing enters the building and near the meter for access to shut off in case of future problems.

*For low income property owners, assistance may be available through the Pierce County Community Action Minor Home Repair Program, telephone number 253-591-7038.*

- **ADJUSTMENT POLICY:** Valley Water District offers a leak adjustment to customers who have had a leak in their private plumbing system when the leak is repaired. A credit equal to 50% of the leaked amount over the average usage for the 12 months prior to the leak may be given upon written request with documentation of prompt repair. The credit may be given no more than once every 24 months and may include no more than two billing periods. A credit can be given after the high usage has been billed.

Please contact the District office if you have questions or require additional information. Office hours are 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.