

How to Check for Water Leaks

Your water meter can be a valuable tool in detecting water leaks in and around your home. Follow these easy steps to check for water leaks.

- Make sure no water is running.
- Turn off all faucets and water-consuming appliances — even your automatic icemaker, evaporative cooler and furnace humidifier.
- Read your water meter.
- Write down the current reading including tenths of a cubic foot (or gallons).
- Read the meter again after 30 to 60 minutes. If the meter reading has changed, you have a leak.

Running Toilet

A toilet that runs continuously can use as much as 200 gallons of water per day! Even a slow, silent leak can add gallons to your bill. Most toilet leaks are at the overflow pipe or at the flapper ball. If it is at the overflow pipe, the water level is usually too high. Sometimes a leak develops below the water line, or the fill valve becomes worn. Worn fill valves also waste water. Consult a plumber if you are not an experienced do-it-yourselfer.

Flapper ball leaks are more difficult to detect than overflow pipe leaks. The best way to check a flapper ball leak is to put a few drops of food coloring in the tank and see if it seeps into the bowl. If it does, the flapper ball is probably leaking from either worn parts or a misaligned mechanism. A do-it-yourselfer should be able to fix this problem.

Irregular mineral deposits can form between the flapper ball and drain lip. Check the flapper ball to ensure that it closes and seals the drain successfully.

Faucets

Worn washers are another common cause of water leaks. If faucets drip after they've been turned off firmly, usually the washer is worn and needs to be replaced. This task involves shutting off the water supply, dismantling the faucet and replacing the washer. Consult a hardware store or do-it-yourself book. If the faucet still leaks after you've replaced the washer, consult a plumber. Even a slow drip can use as much as 3,000 gallons of water a year.

Valves

When correcting faulty and leaking plumbing, it is important that your shut-off valves are properly located and in working order. Old valves that no one has turned for many years may spring leaks when used. Small leaks may be corrected by tightening the packing nut. Main residential shut-off valves are located where the main water line first enters the home and on the residential side of the water meter. Most sinks, wash basins, water heaters and toilets have their own shut-off valves, most showers and tubs do not.

For More Information

The Missouri Public Service Commission (PSC) regulates investor-owned water, sewer, natural gas, electric and steam utilities. The PSC also has limited jurisdiction over telecommunications providers in Missouri. The PSC works to ensure Missouri citizens receive safe, reliable and reasonably priced utility services. If you have an inquiry, billing question or service-related issue that your utility provider cannot answer, please call the PSC at **1-800-392-4211** or visit our website at **psc.mo.gov**.



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