



Learn to Read Your Water Meter

• Monitor Your Usage • Find Costly Leaks • Lower Your Bill

Proper water usage and conservation is an effective method for all citizens to help manage our available water resources. Understanding your water usage and finding and repairing leaks on a timely basis will contribute to the overall management of our resources and save you money.

Locating your meter

In this area of the country, water meters are located inside properties to prevent them from freezing. The water meter is usually located in the basement, close to where the water service enters the property. Occasionally it may be located in a crawl space. If you have difficulty locating your meter, find where the water service enters your property and follow the service line. Eventually it will lead to your water meter.

Reading your water meter

Reading your water meter is like reading a car odometer. You read the numbers left to right. This reading is the total cubic feet (1 cubic foot = 7.48 gallons) of water that has passed through the meter over its lifetime. Most meters have six dials. Larger meters have seven dials (six dials and a fixed zero at the end).

Calculating your water use

Pick a starting point at which to read your meter. Record the reading and date/time. Anytime after that, record the reading and date/time again. Subtract the first reading from the second to find your usage. Since the meters record usage in cubic feet, convert the usage to gallons by multiplying your usage times 7.48.

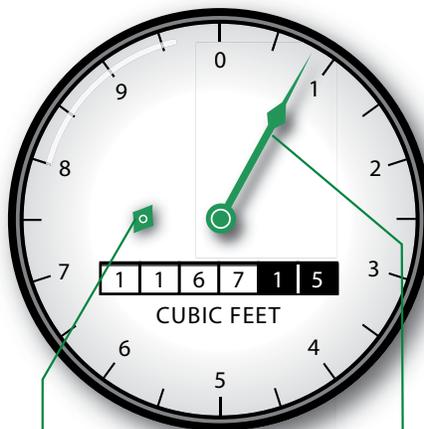
Example:

First reading.....142,650 cubic feet
 Second reading143,270 cubic feet
 Difference (water used)620 cubic feet
 Gallons used.....620 x 7.48 = 4,638 gallons

Note: Sioux Falls bills in units of one hundred cubic feet, (noted on your bill as CCF) so this usage would be rounded off to six billing units.

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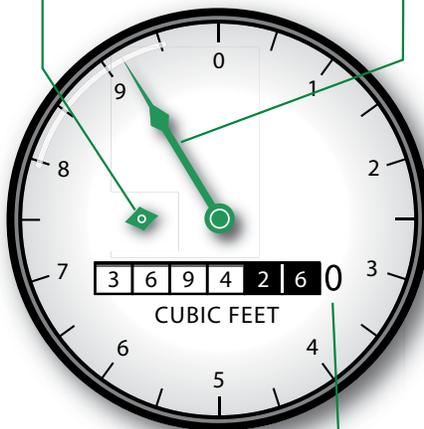
six-digit readout



leak indicator

sweep hand

seven-digit readout



fixed zero

Finding Leaks

Some leaks are easy to find—a leaky faucet or a dripping shower head—but others may go unnoticed. We have experienced situations where undetected toilet leaks, malfunctioning water softeners, and irrigation system leaks have cost customers hundreds of dollars. Following are tips to help find undetected leaks at your property:

Leak Indicator Method—The little red diamond on the face of your meter is a *leak indicator*. It will rotate with a very low flow through the meter. Make sure all water use inside and outside of the property is turned off. When you know that all water usage is off, the leak indicator should not move.

Meter Comparison Method—Another method to check for leaks is to compare the meter readings at periodic intervals. For example, read and record your water meter reading and sweep hand. Repeat the process several hours later. If there is a change in the reading, you may have a leak. Comparing meter readings before you go to work and when you get home, or before you go to bed and when you get up, are ideal times to check for leaks.

Make sure you take into account any water that may have been used (ice makers, water softeners, etc.). If you have determined that a leak exists, you may be able to isolate the problem by turning off each water-using device one at a time and recheck your meter.

Toilet leaks—When a toilet leaks, water escapes from the tank into the bowl and washes away into the sewer system. Toilets are notorious for hidden leaks. Unless a toilet “runs” after each flush, we seldom notice them. The best way to find a toilet leak is to put a small dye tablet or a few drops of food coloring in the tank. Wait 10 to 15 minutes to see if the color shows up in the bowl without flushing the toilet. If color appears, your toilet is leaking. Dye tablets are available free of charge at the Utility Billing Office.

Monitor Your Water Usage

Monitoring your water usage is easy. Just periodically read your water meter and calculate usage (same method described above to check for water leaks). For example, if you want to know how much water your irrigation system is using each time it cycles, record the meter reading, run your irrigation system, re-read your meter, and calculate the usage. Use the same method to determine how much water your appliances are using (dishwasher, clothes washer, water softener, etc.). Read your meter periodically to calculate a daily, weekly, or seasonal average.



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