



# HAVE CONTINUOUS OR HIGH WATER USAGE — NOW WHAT?

Follow the 5 R's of EWEB's self-guided assessment to help find and fix the cause of continuous or high water usage.

## Using this guide

Receiving a notification of continuous use or a higher than typical bill does not necessarily mean you have a water leak. Following the steps in this guide can help you narrow down the cause of continuous or high water use, then find and fix the leak if that is the cause.



## Step 1: Realization

### How do you know if you should look for a leak?

1. We called or emailed you because your smart water meter recorded 48 hours of continuous water use of at least 10 gallons per hour.
2. We left you a notice or called you because your monthly water use was higher than is typical for your home this time of year.
3. Your water or wastewater charges may be higher than usual, which caught your attention. Sometimes customers notice an increase in wastewater charges, which are based on water usage, before they notice the increase to water charges.

### Follow the clues

1. Read the email notification carefully. It includes an estimate of how many gallons of water per hour the meter recorded as continuous usage.
2. If a meter reader notes higher water use than typical for your home, they will leave a notice. The notice provides two important things: your usage for the billing period and whether water was flowing through the meter at the time of the reading, which is also provided.
3. Review the water usage details, often on the second page of your bill. Take a close look at the usage graph. Did usage spike recently? Is there a steady increase in usage over time? Does it look in line with the same month last year?

What may start as a relatively small leak, can quickly grow in size leading to a substantial impact to your monthly bill. We encourage you to address small leaks now as they often get worse over time.

Leak Size	Gallons Wasted Per Hour	Gallons Wasted Per Day	*Potential Impact to Water Charges (approximate)	
			\$/Day	\$/Month
1/32"	10	240	\$/Day <1 - 1	\$/Month \$22 - 29
1/16"	40	960	\$/Day \$4 - 5	\$/Month \$107 - 134
1/8"	160	3,840	\$/Day \$18 - 22	\$/Month \$552-659
1/4"	630	15,120	\$/Day \$77 - 91	\$/Month \$2,310 - 2,730
1/2"	2,540	60,960	\$/Day \$315 - 371	\$/Month \$9,440 - 11,128



### City of Eugene Wastewater Charges

Water leaks that occur between December and April may also impact your City of Eugene wastewater charges. Read more about how water usage (and leaks) impact wastewater charges on the last page of this assessment.

\*Range is based on residential pricing, assumes a usage of 8,000 gallons (8 kgals) and a 30 day billing period. The lower end of the range is for a home served by a pumping system at base level (below 800 feet). The higher end of the range takes into consideration a home served by a level 3 pumping system (1,150+ feet). **The potential impact does not include City of Eugene wastewater charges.**

## Step 2: Reflection

Is there a potential explanation for recent continuous usage or higher than typical usage?

- 💧 Do you have a constantly running toilet?
- 💧 Was water left running somewhere? Check faucets indoors and out.
- 💧 Did you turn on your sprinkler system? Is it on a timer? Is it running as expected?
- 💧 Any household changes that correspond to the timing of continuous/high usage? Did you fill a pool? Have a lot of house guests? Put in (and water) a new lawn?
- 💧 Is the recent higher bill a “true-up” following an estimated read? Review previous bills to check whether they may have been based on estimated meter readings.

## Step 3: Research

How do you confirm a leak and isolate where it a may be located?

### Check your meter

1. Make sure NO water is being used inside our outside of your house. Wait to flush toilets, wash hands, run the dishwasher or do laundry until after the meter test is done. Remember to turn off the automatic refill in your fridge’s ice maker.
2. Carefully lift the lid off of the meter box. If you have a smart meter, there will be a module in the lid with a cable connected to the meter inside. This is how the meter transmits readings. Be careful you don’t accidentally disconnect the cable.
3. Write down the numbers on the face of the meter.
4. Wait about a half hour.
5. Read the water meter again. If the numbers on the meter have changed, water is flowing through your meter even when you know you aren’t intentionally using water. A leak is a strong possibility if you ruled out the culprits listed in step 2 above.

### Can’t find your meter?

Your water meter is usually near the street. Look in your front yard, near the sidewalk or in the space between the curb and sidewalk for a cement lid covering the in-ground meter.

### Second, isolate the leak

#### Inside of the home

##### *Toilet Leaks*

Toilets are a common location for indoor leaks and can easily go unnoticed. You can turn the water off to the toilet and perform a meter check again, or try a dye test.

**Toilet Dye Test:** Add a few drops of food coloring to the tank. Wait at least 30 minutes. If the dye has run into the bowl, the toilet has a leak. Be sure to flush afterwards so the dye doesn’t stain the toilet bowl.

##### *Indoor Plumbing*

After you have ruled out toilets and other indoor fixtures, it may be time to consider plumbing you can’t readily see. If possible, look under the home for leaks or wet spots.

## Looking outside the home

If you can't find a cause inside the home, turn your attention to outside.

If you have an underground sprinkler system, close the master valve. Do the meter test again. If the numbers don't change the leak is likely in your sprinkler system. If they do change, you may have a leak in the water service line from the meter to your house.

### Water service line leaks

**Try the visual test:** Look (and feel) for signs of water flow or seepage on your property — maybe a puddle that never dries, a darker spot on dry concrete or a patch of extra lush lawn.

### Irrigation or sprinkler system leaks

**Try the visual test for leaks underground:** Look (and feel) for signs of water flow or seepage on your property in areas you water.

**Isolate by zone:** If your system has zones, run each one separately and look for water bubbling up from the ground or spurting from a sprinkler head.

### Can't find a leak?

If the results of your meter test indicate you have a leak but you haven't been able to locate it, it may be time to call in some professional help. Many plumbers can perform leak detection as well as repair services. Alternatively, you could contact a local detection service.

## Step 4: Repair

### Fixing the leak: DIY or Pro?

Many household leaks are easy to fix with a few tools and education. If you plan to DIY, check out some helpful tips for fixing common household leaks at [eweb.org/leak](http://eweb.org/leak). Your local hardware store experts can be another helpful resource.



#### Need a pro?

Most plumbers or contractors will give you a free estimate. Don't necessarily hire the first person you find. Take the time to get more than one bid for repairs.



#### Leaking toilet?

If you have an older toilet, you might consider replacing it rather than repairing it. We offer a rebate for high and ultra-high efficiency toilets. Visit [eweb.org/leak](http://eweb.org/leak) for more info.



#### Leaking water service line?

To help with catastrophic leaks, we offer a zero-percent interest loan for line replacement for qualifying customers. We also have grant funding available for limited-income customers. Visit [eweb.org/leak](http://eweb.org/leak) or call 541-685-7088 to learn more.



Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.

### CALL BEFORE YOU DIG!

Avoid injury, expense and penalties by knowing where underground utility lines are buried before you begin a digging project. Call 811 or 1-800-322-2344 for assistance from the Oregon Utility Notification Center. You can also submit an online request at [digsafelyoregon.com](http://digsafelyoregon.com).

## Step 5: Resolution

Once the leak is repaired, you may qualify for an adjustment to your water and/or wastewater charges.

**EWEB Water Charges:** Customers who resolve a leak in a timely manner may be eligible for an adjustment on water charges a maximum of once in a 3 year period, for up to 3 billing cycles. Consider whether the bill increase resulting from your leak is worth using your available adjustment. Call customer service at 541-685-7000 to see if you are eligible for a water adjustment, or submit an application with supporting documentation online at [eweb.org/leak](http://eweb.org/leak).

EWEB is the billing agent for City of Eugene wastewater charges. While we work together to make requesting and receiving adjustments a smooth experience, each entity is responsible for only their respective services and may have different qualifications for receiving an adjustment.



**City of Eugene Wastewater Charges:** It's important to understand how your water usage affects wastewater charges. From May to November wastewater charges are based on the average of your previous winter water usage (December- April). If you have a leak occur May - November when wastewater charges are based on winter average, it will not impact your wastewater charges, thus you would not qualify for an adjustment.

Contact the City of Eugene Utility Administration at 541-682-4900 or [cepwutilityadmin@ci.eugene.or.us](mailto:cepwutilityadmin@ci.eugene.or.us)