

Troubleshooting for Unusual Water Use



1. Do the “one-hour” test

Read all of the numbers on the water meter straight across from left to right and write those numbers down. (For a short video on locating and accessing your water meter, visit <https://youtu.be/BUMZ9xKWJMo>) Do not use any water on the property for one hour. After an hour has passed, read all of the numbers on the meter again. If the numbers changed, it means that water flowed through the meter and into the property. It is the owner’s responsibility to locate and repair the source of this lost consumption (leak).

2. Do the “all day” (or “all night”) test

Turn off the ice maker and read the meter before you leave for the day (or for the night). Take another meter reading when you return. If the numbers on the meter changed, something (or someone) used water on your property. It is the owner’s responsibility to locate and repair the source of this lost consumption (leak).

3. Do the “before & after” test on your sprinkler system

Read all of the numbers on the water meter that services your sprinkler system, and write those numbers down. Operate your lawn sprinkler system for the same amount of time and use the same number of stations you normally do. Visually inspect all stations, checking for broken sprinkler heads or other problems at the surface. When the system cycle has totally finished, take another full meter reading. Subtract the first reading from the second reading to calculate the amount of water used. If there are any breaks or loose fittings underground, the water loss will only show up when you run the full cycle of the system. Because water naturally flows in a path of least resistance and gravity pulls it down, many underground leaks do not appear on the surface of the ground. Also, you should routinely check the settings of the electronic timer, as electrical storms and power outages can affect or change your time settings.

4. Do the “food coloring” test

Remove the cover from the tank of the toilet and put enough food coloring in the clear water of the toilet tank to darken the color of the water. Do not flush the toilet for 30 minutes. If the darkened water from the tank moves into the toilet bowl, it indicates that the flapper on the bottom of the toilet tank may need to be replaced. A worn or misaligned flapper can cause a toilet to ‘run’ constantly, which can be heard by listening closely near the bottom edge of the tank. It also causes the tank to refill automatically every 5 to 20 minutes.

5. Do the “water level” test

Remove the cover from the tank of the toilet and look at the long open pipe standing up in the middle of the tank, called the overflow tube. The top of the water level should be about 2 inches below the top edge of this overflow tube. If the water level is up to the top of the overflow tube, water silently slips over the edge of the tube and right on down to the sewer. This will cause the toilet to constantly refill with new water. If you find that the water level is too high, the float mechanism in the tank may need to be adjusted or replaced.

NOTE: It is the property owner's responsibility to locate and repair all sources of lost water consumption (leaks) on the property.

To view your daily water usage and sign up for high bill alerts, register at www.arlingtonTX.gov/KnowYourH2O.

Go to www.SaveArlingtonWater.com for more money-saving water conservation tips!
Questions? Contact us at 817-275-5931 or water@arlingtontx.gov