

Water Meter – Your Personal Leak Detective

Step 1. Locate your meter

At residential properties, the water meter is generally located in the ground near the curb in front of the house. The meter box will have a metal lid with “Water Meter” marked on top.

Step 2. Open the meter

To read the meter, remove the lid of your water meter box. Be careful. Lids can be heavy. Replace the lid when finished looking at the meter to avoid a safety hazard.

Step 3. Find the leak detection dial

Most residential meters have a leak detection dial. The leak detection dial may be a red or black triangular-shaped dial or a snowflake-shaped dial. It may spin rapidly when water is running. If water is dripping, the leak detection may move slowly.

Checking for leaks

The meter is a great tool for checking your home for leaks. Now that you are familiar with where your meter is located and how it works, follow these steps to see whether you have a leak.

Step 1. Stop using water

Turn off all water inside and outside the house including showers, sinks, the washing machine, and any other appliance that uses water.

Step 2. Watch the meter

- Carefully take the lid off the water meter box.
- If your meter has a triangular or snowflake “leak indicator” dial and it is spinning you may have a leak.
- If there is no leak indicator and the actual meter sweep hand is moving, water is running somewhere in your system and you may have a leak.
- If the hand is not moving, note the position of the hand and wait several hours, making sure not to use any water in the house or yard. Check the meter again. If it has moved, you may have a slow leak.

Step 3. Find the leak – indoors or outdoors?

If you do have a leak, you will need to determine whether it’s an indoor leak or an outdoor leak.

- Locate the main water shut-off valve in your house. It is usually located near the water heater, which may be in your basement or garage.
- Turn off the valve.

Step 4. Test the valve.

Turn on a faucet inside the house to test your shut-off valve.

- If water still flows from the faucet after several seconds, the shut-off valve is not working. There is no way to tell whether the leak is indoors or outdoors.
- If no water flows from the faucet, the shut-off valve is working. Return to the meter.

Step 5. Check whether the meter's leak indicator or dial hand is moving

- If the leak indicator or dial hand is still moving, water is flowing between the meter and the shut-off valve in the house. That means you may have a leak between the shut-off valve and your meter, possibly an underground leak. The property owner is responsible for water pipes from the meter to the house.
- If the hand is not moving, you may have a leak somewhere within your home's plumbing system. Possible sources are leaking toilets, faucets, appliances or even garden hoses.

Checking for a toilet leak

The toilet is one of the most common places to find leaks in the home. Sometimes it's easy to tell whether a toilet is leaking—you hear water running. But leaks can be silent too. Checking for toilet leaks is easy:

Step 1. Remove the toilet tank lid.

Step 2. Place a dye table or 10 drops of food coloring into the toilet tank. Do not flush.

Step 3. Wait 10-15 minutes. If color appears in the bowl, this means water is leaking from the tank.

Step 4. Replace or repair the flush valve in your toilet.