

Water Conservation

It's Only a Small Drip...Right?

Imagine that the dot inside these brackets [•] is the only hole in your home's water system. Based on size alone, that hole may not seem especially worth tracking down; however, that hole can waste more than 4,000 gallons of water each month, or enough water to shower every day for a year! When you consider how important water is to so many aspects of our daily lives, ranging from agriculture to industry to simple hydration and nutrition, you come to realize how even that tiny hole deserves our immediate attention.

Studies show that leaks account for as much as 14% of all indoor water use, which is equivalent to 10 gallons per person of water lost each day. According to the EPA, 10% of American homes have leaks that waste 90 gallons or more per day! To ensure that you're not sending extra water and money down the drain, here are some strategies to help keep your home as leak-free as possible.

Checking for Leaks

A good way to determine if you have a leak in your home is to check your winter water usage. If a family of four use more than 12,000 gallons of water per month during the colder months, it is likely that there is a serious leak.

Your water meter is another great resource you can utilize when trying to determine whether or not your water-using appliances and fixtures have "silent" leaks. Your water meter measures the amount of water entering your home or business, and most are located on the basement level near the wall closest to the street. In Concord, the meters use straight-reading dials that are read in the same way as a car's odometer. To use your water meter to determine if you have a leak, take the following steps:

- **Turn off all indoor and outdoor faucets tightly**, as well as all water-using appliances. This includes water dispensers and ice-makers in refrigerators.
- **Use no water for 20-minutes.**
- **Check your water meter.** The small black or red triangle or the red needle that rotates are low-flow indicators or "leak detectors" that sense very small amounts of water passing through the meter. If this dial is moving, chances are, you have a leak.
- Additionally, you can record the meter reading number and check back an hour or two later. Do not use any water. If the second reading is higher, you likely have a leak.

Common Culprit: Leaky Toilets

Leaky toilets can plague both new and old homes, and are the most common cause of high water bills. They can range from small to large, constant to random, or from audible to silent. Fortunately, most toilet leaks are relatively easy and inexpensive to repair.

A simple way to determine if you have a leaky toilet is to use food coloring, or stop by the Water & Sewer Division and pick up a Toilet Leak Detection Kit. First, remove the tank lid. Then, add either a few drops of food coloring or one dye tablet



to the tank to turn the water a different color. Put the tank lid back on, and wait 15 minutes without flushing. If food coloring or dye appears in the bowl, the flapper valve in your toilet is leaking and should be replaced! This is the most common type of toilet leak.

The second most common type of toilet leak is caused by an improperly adjusted or broken fill (ballcock) valve. If the float is set too high or if the shut-off valve fails completely, water will continuously enter the tank and flow into the overflow tube. You can see this type of leak simply by removing the tank lid and observing if water flows into the overflow tube once the tank is full.

Common Culprit: Leaky Faucets

A leaky faucet that drips at the rate of only one drip per second can waste more than 3,000 gallons of water each year! If you notice a dripping faucet in your home, first try closing it tightly. If that doesn't stop the drip, the most likely cause is a worn out rubber washer. With the right tools, a worn or damaged washer is relatively easy and inexpensive (less than \$5.00) to replace.

This process does require shutting off the water under the sink and removing the sink handle. For a helpful instructional guide on repairing a faucet, visit <http://www.diynetwork.com/how-to/how-to-repair-a-compression-faucet/index.html>. For an instructional video on how to replace a washer, visit http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15A0V7lj_Lo.