

Using Your Water Meter to Test for Leaks

Undetected leaks can be costly. Fortunately, your water meter can help you detect leaks.

How to locate your meter

Your water meter is probably located in front of your house, inside a concrete or plastic meter box that is set flush with the ground. Look for your meter behind the sidewalk at a side lot line near the street. If your home is on a corner lot, your water meter could be located either on the front or side street. Sometimes, meter boxes are not easily visible due to landscaping and other obstructions.

How to read your meter

Reading your water meter is like reading the odometer in your car. Read all the numbers from left to right that appear under the words “cubic feet.”

The first digit on the right represents 1 cubic foot. The second from the right represents 10 cubic feet. The third from the right (usually a different color) represents 100 cubic feet, or 1 ccf. One revolution of the meter sweep-hand equals 1 cubic foot, or 7.48 gallons.

How to use your meter to test for leaks

To use your meter to test for leaks, turn off all your faucets and water-using appliances (such as dish and clothes washers) and be sure no one in the household is using any water. Then go to your water meter and lift the cover of the meter dial. Note the position of the sweep-hand, or use a marker on the lens cover. If you have a typical water meter, there should be no movement of the dials on the meter.

Wait 20 to 30 minutes and check the sweep-hand location again. If the sweep-hand has moved, you probably have a leak somewhere in your system. If the small red diamond-shaped indicator on the face of the meter is moving, it also means you probably have a leak. Retest to be certain. Then locate the leak by inspecting all the pipes, fixtures and appliances that use water.