

Step 6 - Finding an Interior Leak

The leak detection dial is not sensitive enough to spin with very small leaks such as a dripping faucet or fitting. If the star is spinning, look for a steady stream of water. The toilet by far is the most common culprit. The toilet ball shut-off may not be operating properly, or the flapper valve might not be sealing closed. If it is not a toilet, check the hot water tank. Check that no water is dripping or flowing from the hot water tank pressure relief valve and discharge pipe. The relief valve on the tank is typically piped to discharge outside the home or into a drain next to the hot water tank. If there is water from the relief, it may have popped off due to high pressure or valve failure. If neither the toilet nor hot water tank is the problem, check the crawl space for any signs of damp soil, pooling or streams of water. Also, check under all the sinks for a leaky fitting.



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

Step 7 - Finding an Exterior Leak

Call 811 before you dig! This is a free service to locate underground utilities. The service will coordinate and notify applicable underground utilities to come out and locate their utility lines so they are marked before digging. More information can be found at their web site www.call811.com.

Many exterior leaks are due to faulty fittings and couplings at service line end connections – either at the house or at the meter. Signs of a leak near the house might not be evident due to footing drains around the foundation that collect and direct water away from the structure. Thoroughly investigate visually and by digging near the meter and where the service line enters the house - these are the two highest probability places to check first and eliminate. Look around sprinkler system heads for wet or green spots. If a leak is not found in these locations, it may be difficult to locate. Also, look for sink holes, cracked pavement, green areas, etc.



LAKE WHATCOM WATER
& SEWER DISTRICT

1220 LAKEWAY DRIVE
BELLINGHAM, WA 98229

Phone: 360-734-9224
Fax: 360-738-8250
Email: general.inbox@lwwsd.org

revised 02-06-2012

LAKE WHATCOM WATER
& SEWER DISTRICT

TIPS TO FIND A WATER LEAK



General Information

All water services in Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District are metered. The District reads meters every two months. As a courtesy while preparing bi-monthly bills, the District notifies customers who have higher than normal consumption. Notification may be in the form of a letter or door tag.

Higher than normal usage could be a result of known or unknown events such as: higher water consumption by guests and occupants, extended irrigation during dry weather, leaving a garden hose on, toilet flush valve stuck open, or possibly a service line leak.

If a leak is suspected, the information and steps described below might help find or narrow down the location of a possible leak. In many cases it is relatively simple to repair a leak once it is found. Handy people can fix leaks even if they are unfamiliar with piping and fittings. Local hardware stores will be able to assist in finding the right parts for the repair. Otherwise, the District recommends that customers obtain quotes from several reputable plumbers before hiring a plumber to find and repair a leak. Ask friends and neighbors for plumber references they have used and trust.

Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District is here to support its customers. The District can assist with locating the meter, shutting water off at the meter, questions about billing, and general questions about how to find leaks. However the District cannot recommend specific plumbers or assist with finding or repairing leaks on the customer's side of the meter. Service lines and plumbing system on the customer's side of the meter are privately owned and maintained and are the responsibility of the property owner.

If you have questions, please contact the District at (360) 734-9224.

7 STEPS TO FINDING A LEAK

Step 1 - Locate Your Meter

Meters are generally located at one of the property corners along the public road frontage. They are installed underground inside a meter box which can be a black plastic box or concrete box with a metal cover labeled "Water Meter." If the meter cannot be located, please call the District office for assistance. In many cases the District can lookup location descriptions and relay that information over the phone for hints on where it might be. Sometimes water meters are in unusual places. For difficult locations, the District's meter reader will visit the site to assist in finding the meter.

Step 2 - Open the Meter Box

Generally, there is a smaller lid within the larger lid covering the meter box. A screwdriver may be required to pry open the small lid. After the small lid is open, it provides a hand hole to reach in and pull off the entire cover if needed to view the meter. Please put the lid back when you are done to avoid a safety hazard. Many times there are two meters in the box. To identify a meter, compare the number on top of the black cap to the meter number listed on the account bill.

Step 3 - Understanding the Dial

District meters measure water use in cubic feet. One cubic foot equals 7.48 gallons. In the adjacent photo, the meter reads 29809. All of the numbers are read for billing purposes. The register does not reset to zero after each bi-monthly read. One complete "sweep" of the sweep hand means one cubic foot of water has passed through the meter.



Step 4 – Find the Leak Detection Dial

Meters are equipped with a leak detection dial (see pho-

to). The leak detection dial is the 6-pointed silver star in the center of the meter. The star will spin slowly even with very low flow, such as a toilet valve running. The star spins faster for higher flow rates. To test if there is leak, turn off all water fixtures in the house then visually check if the star is spinning. If the star is spinning, there is a leak either inside or outside the house.

Step 5 – Determine if the Leak is Inside or Outside the House

Find the shut-off valve for the home. Sometimes these are not easy to find. The District maintains water service line records for homes built after 2001 which might help locate the shut-off valve. Close the shut-off valve by rotating the handle clockwise and then check your faucets to confirm water is completely off. On older construction shut-off valves may not seal tightly due to corrosion or sediment in the valve body.

When the shut-off valve is closed and water is completely off, check the leak detection dial (silver star) on the meter. If it is not spinning, the leak is inside the home. If it is still spinning, then the leak is somewhere between the shut-off valve and the meter box.

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Bellingham, WA 98229
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Fax: 360-738-8250
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