**Potential Causes of High-Water Bills**

An unusually high-water bill is most often caused by a leak or change in water use. Some common causes of high-water bills include:

* A leaking toilet, or a toilet that continues to run after being flushed (see additional information below)
* A dripping faucet: a faucet drip can waste 20 gallons of water a day or more
* Filling or topping off a swimming pool
* Watering the lawn, new grass, or trees; also check for an open hose bib
* Kids home for summer vacations or school holidays; guests
* Water-cooled air conditioners
* A broken water pipe or obvious leak; check the pipes in the basement or crawlspace; the water heater could also be leaking
* Water softener problems-cycles continuously
* Running the water to avoid freezing water pipes during cold weather

Generally, water consumption is higher during the summer. Typically, an average family of four uses 4000-5000 gallons of water a month. Here are a few things to check if you get a bill that is higher than usual.

**Changes in your water use**

Did you have house guest, water your lawn more than usual, or do any thing out of the ordinary in the last month? If so, this may account for an increase in your water bill.

**Check for leaks**

Leaks, whether unseen or unfixed, can waste hundreds and even thousands of gallons of water. It is important to routinely check your plumbing and home for leaky faucets, toilets, and outside taps and irrigation lines.

**Toilet and faucet leaks**

The most common cause for high water bills is running water from your toilet. A continuously running toilet can waste several hundreds or even thousands of gallons a day, even the ones that you cannot hear! The EPA estimates that your toilet alone can use 24% of your home’s water consumption, and that is when it is working properly. See the toilet assessment below for help in determining if this is the cause of your high-water bill.

**Outdoor and underground leaks**

Leaks can also occur in harder to find places, such as under your house or in the service line between you water meter and your home or business. Check outdoor spigots and crawl spaces, and look for wet spots in your yard, which may indicate a leak.

**Do-It-Yourself Assessment**

First check for the most common leak; a deteriorated or defective flush valve (flapper) ball at the bottom of the toilet tank. If it does not make a tight seal, water will leak into the toilet bowl. To check for this:

* Take the lid off the tank behind the bowl; flush the toilet, then wait for it to fully refill.
* Put a few drops of dye or a colored dye tablet (available at some hardware stores) in the tank.
* Wait at least 20 minutes; longer if you suspect it is a small leak.
* If there is any color in the toilet bowl, there is a leak.

The second most common type of leak has to do with an improperly adjusted or broken fill valve. To check for this, take the lid off the toilet tank, flush, and see if water is draining into the overflow tubes when the tank is full.

The following table shows an estimate of the amount of water that can be lost (and billed to your account) for various size leaks.

