



## *On the list – What Next?*

If your address is on the Water Usage Alert Lists for either a 24-hour period of increasing water meter readings or high daily average usage compared to your historical average daily usage, please follow for guidance provided below.

You may know why your property is on one of these lists. Maybe you already found a leak and had it repaired, maybe your property is a business and normally can use a varying amount of water based on production, maybe you just moved into a house that was vacant for a period of time, all of these could be a reason for being on the lists.

Water leaks can cause a tremendous amount of damage to your home and belongings if not repaired in a timely manner. Water stains on the ceilings, walls, or floors are usually the first signs that you have a water leak. But what if you can't see any obvious signs? Here are some ways to find hidden leaks in your home before calling a plumber.

## **Water Meter Test**

One way to find hidden water leaks is to conduct a water meter test. Turn off all the faucets in your home and check the water meter, write down the number. If you can see the meter is still running, you have a water leak.

Although you may not see a change right away in the water meter reading, check again after a couple of hours and compare the readings. If the water meter moved, you may be having a slow-moving leak.

## **Check Your Toilet for Leaks**

To check for water leaking from your toilets, drop a little food coloring into the tank overnight. If there's color in the bowl without flushing by morning, you have a leaky toilet. If you regularly need to jiggle the handle to get the toilet to stop running, that is an indication of a leaky toilet. Toilet leaks are normally the cause for a higher than normal usage. Toilets can leak up to 4000 gallons per day.

## Listen for Running Water

If you can't see any obvious signs of a water leak, you can listen for running water. Water leaks can sometimes be heard through walls or floors.

### How do you find a leak in the wall or ceiling?

You can detect water leaks in walls or ceilings when:

- there are puddles of water near a wall
- there is discoloration in the wall or ceiling
- there is a texture change in the wall or ceiling
- there is a musty smell
- there are signs of mold and mildew
- there are water dripping sounds

## Check your Appliances for Leaks

When checking for water leaks from appliances, disconnect all of them from the outlet until you find the appliance that has a leak. Water from a faulty appliance might be dripping slowly.

## Water Drips and Wet Walls

If household members notice visible dampness around your kitchen, bathroom or laundry area, you might have a water leak. Water leaks can cause a mess in your home and allow mold to grow if you don't fix it in time.

## Sprinkler System and outdoor hoses

Outdoor sprinkler system and outdoor hoses can be a source for leaks and high usage. The outdoor sprinkler system should be checked regularly during use (spring and summer months) and in the winter isolated and drained to prevent freezing. Homeowners, should check the sprinkler system regularly for leaks. This can be done by inspecting the yard for puddles or overly wet areas. This would be an indication of a leak. A Water Meter Test can be done, to see if the sprinkler is using water when is it not operating.

Also be aware of use of outdoor hoses, make sure the outside faucet after use turned off. A dripping hose can result in a high usage reading.

## ***What do I do if I think I have a Leak?***

If any of these methods reveal that you have a water leak in your home or property, schedule a water leak repair with a ***trusted local plumber immediately*** to prevent water damage and high water bills.

The Town cannot recommend a plumber but any local plumber should be able to assist, talk to your neighbors and family for references, or check out online reviews or ratings.

## ***What is normal water usage for a three-bedroom house?***

Everyone's patterns and usages are different so there is no definitive answer but there are some norms and averages that you can compare your usage with. The MassDEP (Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection) uses 65 gallons per day per person or 8.7 cu ft per day per person as a normal baseline for the State of Massachusetts. This would be equivalent to a 1500 cu ft per quarter usage for two people. The Town of Sturbridge has an historical average daily usage of 49 gallons per day per person (6.5 cu ft per day per person) based on an annual system wide basis or 1180 cu ft per quarter for two people.

Normal range for quarter usage based on the two basis above are:

Two-person household	1000-1500 cu ft/quarter
Three-person household	1500-2000 cu ft/quarter
Four-person household	2000-2500 cu ft/quarter

These are just baseline averages and your household could be normally above or below these usages depending on personal habits (number of showers or baths, frequency of laundry, watering plants or gardens, sprinkler system, age of fixtures).

## ***How often are water meters read?***

The Town reads the water meters four times a year, on a quarterly basis.

January to end of March - bills sent in April  
April to end of June – bills sent in July  
July to end of September – bills sent in October  
October to end of December - bills sent in January

Quarters are normally 90 to 94 days long depending on weekends and holidays. Meter readings are taken as close to the 1<sup>st</sup> of each period month as possible.

The Water Usage Alert Lists will be posted on the website within a week of the meters being read each quarter.

If you still have questions please email [usageconcerns@sturbridge.gov](mailto:usageconcerns@sturbridge.gov) with your questions, email address and phone number. A Town employee will reach out with a reply or to get more information.