

How to Find a Water Leak in Your House

In most cases the water line running to your home is "metered" for accountability and billing purposes. One small drip can lead to another and before you know it, gallons of water may have silently leaked from your faucet or toilet without you knowing about it. Losing just one gallon of water a day due to a small leak equals 365 gallons a year. You can fill a 5-foot-by-3-foot tub with that amount of water. When you pay for your water, that leak can become very costly.

Yet, even a very small leak can be found through trying a few simple techniques and can save you from a nasty surprise from your local utility company. If you have been notified that you have a leak, here are a few steps you can do before calling a plumber. The more you do, the less it will cost you in the long run!

Turn off all faucets in the house including bathtubs, laundry sinks and outdoor faucets. Make sure the dishwasher and washing machine are not running. Turn off all other appliances that use water.

Listen to see if you can hear your water pump running for no reason if you don't have a water meter you can check. Listen to see if the pump is humming even if you haven't turned on a faucet, flushed the toilet or used the washing machine or dishwasher. If the pump runs for no reason, it could indicate you have a leak somewhere and you should check the house for leaks.

Go through the house and check the spouts of all the faucets for signs of a drip. Rub your finger under the spout to see if you can feel any water, even if the faucet is turned off. Look for puddles of water at the base of all the faucets. Check the shower heads to see if you notice water dripping.

Toilets

Prepare to repair! Check the toilet for leaks by removing the top off the tank and listening very closely. If you hear any hissing at all, try to locate where it is coming from. If you locate the area where the leak is coming from, assess it and determine if you can fix it. If you can't, then call a plumber.

If nothing is noticeable, add some food coloring and put a couple of drops in the tank (not the bowl). Wait several minutes and if you have coloring in the bowl, water is leaking from the tank into the bowl even when the toilet isn't being flushed.

Repeat this procedure with all the toilets in the house. You have a leak in the flapper at the bottom of the tank that is allowing water to seep through. At this point you can assess if you want to do the repair yourself, or call a plumber.

Meter Line

Check the gauge on the water meter, if you have one, after you've turned off all the faucets and appliances that use water, to see if the arrow is rotating on the flow indicator. A moving arrow indicates there is a leak somewhere in your house and you should check for leaks.

If the toilets are fine, check the line running from the meter to the house. While this may sound difficult, you can save money if you can locate the leak for the plumber. If you know you have a shut-off valve by the house, shut it off temporarily and check the meter by removing the lid and watching the dial on top of the meter.

If you can't see the meter head, try digging around because they sometimes have dirt or grass covering the top of them. Once you locate it and the valve is turned off by the house, watch the meter to see if it is turning. If it is still turning, then the leak is between the meter and the house.

At this point, walk the area between the meter and the shut-off valve. Look for signs of a leak such as soft muddy areas, grass that is greener than the rest or growing much faster than other areas. If you see such

an obvious sign, call the plumber or assess if you can make a repair yourself. If you have the valve shut off at the house and the meter has stopped moving, then the leak is somewhere in the house. Try some other techniques to try to locate the problem.

Hot Water Tanks

Check the Pressure Relief Valve on the hot water tank. Sometimes these valves are plumbed directly into a drain and may be leaking without your knowledge. If you can't remove the drain pipe to check for a leak listen for a hissing sound, it may be leaking.

Check the valves on the hot water tank for signs of drips. Hissing sounds near the pipes or valves on the tank can also indicate a leak you wouldn't be able to see.

Hose bibs

Look at all the outside water faucets and see if there is water dripping from the faucet or from the pipe coming out of the exterior wall. Listen carefully for any sound emitting from the hose-bib. If you hear anything at all, remember where it is (perhaps mark it with chalk), and go to the next one. If the sound emitted gets louder at any of the other hose-bibs, then the leak is closer to that particular unit. Note that and contact your plumber. Giving the plumber this information will save the plumber loads of time in finding the leak, which in turn saves you money.

If you survey all the hose-bibs and still find no sound, go into the house and follow the same process with the screwdriver on your house fittings such as faucets in sinks, shower valves, washer, hot water heater (be careful to avoid being scalded when working around the hot water heater). If you are still not sure, just contact the plumber.

Other Leaks

Pull the refrigerator away from the wall and check the connecting water line if your refrigerator has an ice-maker. Look for puddles on the floor or water dripping from the water line.

Pull the washing machine away from the wall and check the water supply line to the washer. Check for puddles under the washer.

Check the shower head for leaks. It should be a fairly straightforward home repair if this is a source of leaking.

If you have a swimming pool, it is important to check to see if it has any leaks.

Near Enough is Helpful

Recognize that in many cases a leak can be very hard to locate. Not all of the leaks can be located and if you're not used to plumbing positioning, you may miss something easily. All the same, if you try these steps, you should be able to find an approximate location and this is a most valuable exercise in itself because it will (many plumbers do not like searching for a problem so anything you can do they will appreciate), make it a time saver for the plumber and that translates into savings for you.

Resources: www.wikihow.com, www.ehow.com,