

UTILITY BILL TOO HIGH?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that, on average in the United States, 183 gallons of water are used per person per day. Adding just one person to your household for the summer (based on 90 days) can add 16,470 gallons of water to your bill! The following is a list from the University of Minnesota Extension Service of some typical water uses and the approximate water use generated:

- Washing machine ~ 50—60 gallons/load
- Bathtub ~ 30 gallons when filled half - full
- Shower ~ 5 gallons per minute
- Toilet ~ 6 gallons/flush
- Sink ~ 2 gallons brushing teeth and 3—5 gallons shaving

The Extension Service suggests reducing the quantity of water used by changing to a more efficient toilet, turning off the water flow while brushing teeth and shaving, and shortening showers.

Your utility bill could also be too high because you have a plumbing problem. To determine this, go to your meter (most meters will be located in your basement utility room or outside your home) and write down the number listed. If you notice that the small red circle on the dial face is spinning and you are not knowingly using water, you likely have a plumbing problem. After reading the meter, use no water for at least two hours. Take a second reading. The numbers should be the same. If the reading has changed, something on the property is pulling water through the meter.

Finding the problem is the responsibility of the property owner; however, our public works department has suggested some places to look.

- A low-flow toilet that runs continuously can use as much as 4,000 gallons of water per day and a standard toilet that runs continuously can use as much as 11,520 gallons of water per day. With Minnetrista residents being billed \$2.99 per thousand gallons of usage, a continuously running toilet could result in a quarterly water bill for over \$3,000.00. To check your toilet for leaks, remove the lid from the tank, flush to clear the water in the bowl, drop in one leak-detecting dye tablet or a few drops of food coloring (start with five drops to see if the water darkens enough) and then wait 15 minutes. If colored water appears in the toilet bowl without additional flushing, there is a leak. This type of leak is typically associated with the plunger ball, flapper valve, and/or the rubber gasket at the bottom of the tank.
- Make sure all faucets are completely turned off. A slow drip can use as much as 5,000 gallons per month. A steady stream can mean a water usage increase of 21,000 gallons per month adding \$260.00 to your quarterly water bill.
- Check all indoor & outdoor faucets for leaks or drips. Worn washers or O-rings can cause your faucets to leak. If the leak can't be fixed, you may have to replace the faucet. Remember, if hot water is leaking, this not only costs you in water usage but in energy usage as well.
- Your shower head should be checked to be sure that it doesn't drip. If it does, it should be repaired or replaced.
- Check to make sure that the water level float is not stuck open on your water softeners, water filters, water heaters, and automatic pool fillers. Water softeners use 40—60 gallons of water per recharge cycle. If it continuously cycles through, it could be disastrous for your utility budget. Be sure these items are adjusted to be recharged only as often as needed for the amount of water actually used.

For assistance in locating or repairing a leak, call your favorite plumber.