

# Does Your Water Bill Seem High?

## Water Leak Adjustment Guideline

**PLEASE SEE THE SECTION BELOW TITLED "IDENTIFYING WATER LEAKS AND OTHER WATER CONSUMPTION ISSUES" IF YOU SUSPECT YOU HAVE A WATER LEAK.**

If you determine that your water bill has gradually been getting larger and does not decrease, you may have a water leak. The Marion, Howell, Oceola, and Genoa (MHOG) Water & Genoa-Oceola (GO) Sewer & Water Authorities have a water leak adjustment guideline that may provide a credit on your utility bill, depending upon the nature of the water leak and if the excess water usage from this leak has not flowed into the sanitary sewer system.

If a water leak is discovered, you should repair the water leak and submit documentation of the repair (including receipts for labor, supplies and equipment) to the HOWELL TOWNSHIP billing office along with the completed HOWELL TOWNSHIP UTILITIES WATER LINE BREAK AND/OR LEAKAGE POLICY. Once your documentation has been reviewed and approved, an adjustment will be made if merited. Any request for an adjustment must be made within (90) days of the water leak repair.

Please read the following before submitting a request for an adjustment to your bill for a water leak:

## For Leaks That Do Not Enter Sewer System

1. Formal written application for a bill adjustment. This application is available at the Howell Township Hall or on our website.
2. Proof of leak and the repair through receipts from a plumber or for parts. (This requirement may be waived if repairs are verifiable.)
3. Our service worker(s) may be sent on location to confirm the location of the leak and verify that the water would not have gone through the sewer system and that the repairs were made and complete.
4. The need to adjust a water bill may be evident by a customer complaint of excessive billing or evidence of water leakage on the customer side of the meter. It is the customer's responsibility to keep their plumbing system in good working order.
5. Only one water adjustment per customer is allowed, unless otherwise waived by action of the Howell Township board.
6. Adjustments on water/sewer bills will not be made on the following:

- Routine dripping faucets, water leaking toilets or any type of faulty customer plumbing.
- Premises left or abandoned or vacated without reasonable care for the plumbing system
- Irrigation systems and/or watering of lawns.

- Homes under construction/major renovation.
- Customer did not take immediate steps, after detection of the water leak, to prevent further loss; and
- Did not provide proof of repair.
- Meter was tampered with in any way.

7. The Howell Township Utility department shall not be obligated to make adjustments of any bills not contested within thirty (30) days from the billing date. An adjustment can only be made for the billing for one billing period.

8. All requests for billing adjustments must be received in writing.

If an adjustment is deemed appropriate, the sewer portion of the excess water will be reduced to the customer's previous 12-month average.

## Payments of Extraordinary Water and/or Sewer Bill

The Utility Director shall have the authority to accept payment of extraordinary water and/or sewer bills in regular payments spread out over a period not to exceed (6) Months. For the purposes of this section, an extraordinary water and/or sewer bill is one which includes a charge for a substantial amount of water loss through a leak.

If you have any questions concerning this information, call the Howell Township Utility Department, Customer Service at 517-546-2817.

## Identifying Water Leaks and other Water Consumption Issues

If your current water bill seems high, consider these questions:

Did you use more water keeping the grass green?

- Did you go on vacation and leave someone else in charge of your lawn watering?
- Do you have an automatic sprinkler system with a broken head?
- Have you put in a new lawn, sprinkler system or pool recently?
- Were children playing with the water outside and accidentally left the hose running?
- Did you do extra loads of laundry before or after a vacation?
- Did you have friends or relatives staying with you?

Outdoor watering can double or triple your water bill. Consider installing a second meter for outside watering, as this usage is only charged the water rate with no additional charge for sewer use.

## Ideas to help you find water leaks and reduce your water consumption

A high water bill may also indicate you have a leak. Even a small leak can waste enough water for you to notice an increase on your bill. Fix your leaks promptly to avoid paying for them each month.

Most leaks are easy to find, but some can go undetected. Here are some ideas to help find a water leak in your home:

Here are some of the first things to do. You can check the meter yourself. The meter is usually in the basement. Make sure all faucets, the washing machine and any other appliances that uses water are off. Look at the top of the meter, there will be a row of numbers, similar to an odometer on a car. (Right next to this there is smaller dial (RED) that spins when water is passing through the meter. If this dial is not moving then you probably do not have a leak. If this dial is moving (and you have confirmed all water is turned off in the home) then there is a leak.

## Toilets

Having a leaky flush mechanism can waste as much as 500 gallons per day!

- Listen and look for running water.
- Put a few drops of food coloring into the tank. If color shows up in the bowl within 30 minutes, the valve or support assembly may need to be replaced.
- See if the ball valve drops squarely into the drain opening. If not, clean it out or replace the ball valve if it is worn.
- Check the flush handle to see if it is stuck in the flush position.
- Bend the float arm to lower the water level to at least one-half inch below the top of the overflow tube.
- Replace the overflow tube if it has holes below the water level.
- Also, consider upgrading to a low-flow toilet if yours was installed before 1993; old toilets may be inefficient, using 2 to 3 more gallons of water per flush.

## Faucets, Bathtubs and Showers

Think about switching your showerhead. While old showerheads can pour out 5 gallons of water every minute, the new low-flow showerheads use just 1.5 to 2.5 gallons per minute, cutting your water use by 50% or more.

Before you buy: Test your current showerhead by placing a 1-gallon bucket in the tub and turning on the tap. If it takes less than 20 seconds to fill, you should consider getting a new showerhead. These showerheads conserve up to 30,000 gallons of water annually; a family of four could save over \$200.00 a year.

Also:

- Replace worn gaskets and washers.
- Replace washer less faucets.
- Tighten waterline connections and valves.

## **Water Softeners (*Not necessary for MHOG Customers*)**

Water softeners are not necessary for customers with MHOG water. Further softening MHOG water could be corrosive to your plumbing.

Have you noticed that you are going through more salt than normal? This is an indication that the softener may be regenerating too frequently.

Look for water drips or stains underneath or around the softener.

## **Furnace Humidifier**

Check for water leaks.

Listen for water dripping or draining into your sump when your furnace is not running.

## **Water Heater**

Replace the pressure and temperature valve, if leaking.

Tighten the drain valve.

## **Dishwasher/Clothes Washer**

The average household will save approximately 5,000 gallons of water per year, compared to washing dishes by hand; assuming you don't use too much water pre-rinsing while loading the machine. Running the dishwasher once a day wins on saving water.

Check that the fill hose hangs straight down and is kink free; the pressure of a kink can wear down the rubber and result in holes. If you can't remember how old your washing machine's hose is, it's probably time to replace it; most should be changed every three to five years. Although hoses cost only \$10 to \$20 at hardware stores, hose failures cause more than \$150 million in damage to U.S. homes each year.

Also, look for water drips or stains underneath or in back of the machine.

## **Outside Faucets**

Replace worn gaskets and washers.

Make sure all hoses are off.

To protect against freezing, always disconnect hoses and shut inside valves to outside faucets during the winter months.

## Sprinkler System

Take a walk through the yard and see if you notice any muddy or spongy spots. There may be a small crack in your underground irrigation line. Do not use the system for a few days. If the spot is still wet that may be where the leak is. Another way to tell is, shut the sprinkler system off. Does the water meter still move? If it does, the system is leaking. Also:

- Have system set to manual, only water when needed.
- Have a rain gauge installed, your system will not start while it is raining.
- Winterize your sprinkler system according to the system's instructions.
- Check for any damage to sprinkler heads.
- Make sure that all testing plugs are closed.

If you are not familiar with performing the above procedures, consult with a qualified plumber to avoid damage to your plumbing system.

If you need additional assistance, please don't hesitate to call us at 517-546-2817 x104.