

## GENERAL METER INFORMATION

Meters used by the City measure water by cubic feet (1 c.f. = 7.48 gallons). Meters are located in a concrete meter box in the ground, usually at a front corner of your lot. If you aren't sure which meter serves your residence, turn on a tap at your residence and see which meter has dials turning. The usage on each bill is for the 2 preceding months. Because of the 2 month cycle, charges for higher summer usage may appear on billings sent after the rainy fall weather has begun. Most accounts have higher usage for the summer months, even with little or no outside watering. We can compare current usage to what is typical water use for your household for that time of year.

## POSSIBLE CAUSES FOR HIGH BILLING

High water usage can have a variety of causes: outdoor watering, additional household members, a misread number, a tap left running, or a leak. Malfunctioning meters do happen but are extremely rare. See below for details:

- **MISREAD:** If you suspect your meter has been misread, it can be easily checked. Compare the present reading on your bill to the reading on your meter. If the number on your meter is smaller than the reading on your statement, the meter has been misread. Call us, we will send the crew out immediately to correct our records, and send an adjusted statement. If the reading on your meter is larger than the present reading on the statement, the reading is accurate. Call if you have questions regarding this procedure.
- **LEAK:** To verify the presence of a leak, note the reading on your meter. Use no water for 30 to 45 minutes and take another reading. If you have used no water the numbers should not change. If they have changed water is going through the meter indicating a leak in your service line. (Leak usage caused by an occasional leak, say a toilet running occasionally, and may require a reading where there will be no usage for a longer period of time, perhaps overnight or when no one would be at the residence for a number of hours. It's not unusual for a meter dial to bounce slightly, indicating small fluctuations of pressure in the water main.

Once you determine a leak is present, the next step is to locate the leak so it can be repaired. This can be as simple as finding a leak in a fixture or a wet spot on the ground that is soft or stays wet even in dry weather. If there is no visible evidence of the leak, you need to determine whether the leak is under the house or in the line between the house and the meter.

First, locate the shut off valve where the water supply enters the building. If there is no valve, you may be able to pinch off the line or install a valve. Once the flow to the house has been stopped continued usage means the leak is between the meter and the house. If usage stops registering, the leak is under the house, and then you should check for leaking fixtures and/or for wet spots under the building. Leaks can also occur in the plumbing in the walls.

If the dials continue to turn when the water is turned off at the house, the leak is somewhere between the meter and the house. Here it will help if you to know the route of your service line. You can dig midway in the line and shutoff or pinch off the line. If the meter continues to run, the leak is between that mid-point and the house. By this process, you can narrow down the location of the leak without digging the entire length of the line.

Leaks often develop where 2 pieces of pipe join, because of a possible weakness at a clamp. Leaks in lines running under paving, structures or landscaping often do not appear at the surface. It can sometimes be more cost effective to install a new line than to locate or dig under the pavement.

**\*\*\*NOTE:** The water service line was installed by a private contractor. We have no records showing the location of your line and cannot repair lines on private property. We do not have equipment that locates underground water leaks. The private line is not regulated or inspected by the City.

City of Bonney Lake  
**REPAIR OF A SERVICE LINE LEAK**

Once the leak is located, leaks can be repaired by the customer or their plumber. No matter what material water service lines are made of, after they've been in the ground a number of years they can become brittle and more easily damaged by tree roots, rocks or driving over the line. Generally speaking, leaks are an indication a pipe has deteriorated to the point where you can expect continued problems.

- **BEFORE YOU DIG:** Call the Utilities Underground Location Service at 1-800-424-5555. There is no charge to you. All public utility lines in the excavation area will be located. If you hit a line and have not called for a locate, the cost of repair will be higher.

When installing a new service line we suggest the following guidelines:

1. Bury the line at least two feet below the ground surface to avoid the possibility of freezing.
2. Place the line in a conduit in areas where future excavation for repair would be a problem.
3. Use 200 psi poly pipe equivalent or better.
4. Make a map of the line location and/or place a line of metal wire in the ditch with the new line to assist in future locating.
5. Place a shut off valve both where the plumbing enters the building and near the meter for access to shut off in case of future problems.

*For a low income property owner, assistance may be available through Pierce County Community Action Minor Home Repair Program, call 253-798-7038.*

- **ADJUSTMENT POLICY:** The City of Bonney Lake offers a leak adjustment to customers who have had a leak in their private plumbing system when the leak is repaired. The adjustment shall be two-thirds of that portion of the customer's water bill which is over the average normal water usage. An adjustment may be granted upon written request with documentation (repair receipts) and approximate date of prompt repair. Adjustments are granted no more than once in each 2 year period and apply to billings for three months, or two consumption billings. The adjustment shall be limited to the period of 90 days prior to the repair of the leak. This process may take approximately 60-90 days depending upon the date your leak was repaired and the next scheduled meter reading cycle, which are done bi-monthly.
- **METER MALFUNCTION:** Occasionally, a water meter does malfunction. A malfunctioning meter can record usage at a higher or lower rate than is accurate, but does not record usage when no water is being used. A water meter is a simple mechanism with a paddle wheel that is rotated by the flow of water through the meter. If no water is flowing, the wheel cannot rotate on its own. You can request a meter test by signing the form available at our office. If a meter is found to be malfunctioning, it will be replaced and the billing adjusted. If the meter is NOT malfunctioning, the billing is NOT adjusted and your account is charged a service fee of \$50.00. Prior to this test your meter is removed and replaced with a new meter. The meter is taken directly to the City shop where a pre-measured amount of water is run through the meter verifying proper reading. Because of the service fee, it is best to explore all other options before requesting a meter test.

If you have questions or require additional information, please contact the utility desk at (253) 447-4317.  
Office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.