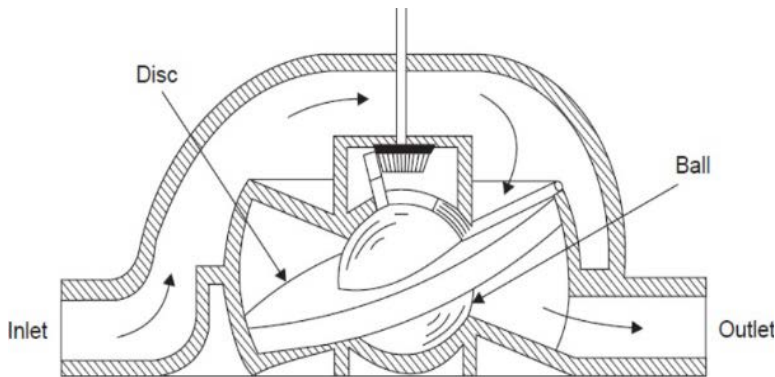




Is My Meter Right?

A quick guide for customers that have a new meter and a higher bill

So you recently had a new water meter installed, and now your water bill is higher than usual. Your first question is probably “did my new meter make a mistake?” Here’s the bad news: it most likely isn’t because your new meter is “over-reading”. Rather, your old meter was “under-reading”. Below is a brief explanation as to why this happens.



Your old meter was mechanical, and just like any other mechanical device it can wear out over time. Inside your old meter was a disc that rotated when water flowed through the meter. This disc becomes stiff or stuck over time, causing it to not rotate as freely as it used to. If it’s not rotating, then the water flowing through it doesn’t get registered. The average lifespan of a mechanical meter is 15 years. However, many meters in our service area are older than this.

“OK, my old meter was really old, and probably under-registering. But this bill is still high, and there is no way it can be right.”

We understand that your bill can be a bit of a shock, so let’s break it down. You will need access to your WaterSmart portal to complete the following steps.

1. Check for Reasonableness:

The average household in Santa Cruz uses 47 gallons per person per day. This works out to about 6 CCF per month for a three person household. Homes with landscapes that are watered regularly can expect to use more than that. Take your most recent bill and determine your household’s average water use per person using the following formula:

of CCF used x 748 gallons ÷ number of days in your billing period ÷ number of people in your household.

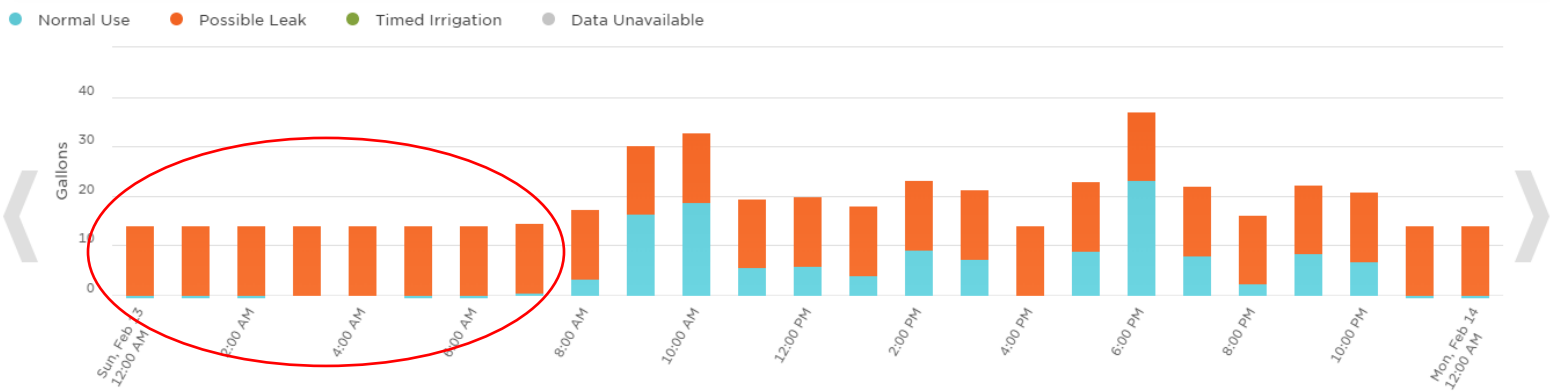
- If you end up with a number between 40 and 65 gallons per person per day, that would be considered normal, and you are most likely using all of that water in one way or another.
- If you end up with a number above 65 gallons per person per day, that doesn’t necessarily mean that your meter is over-reading, but there may be some other things going on. See the next two points.

How Much Water Does it Use?

- Most toilets use 1.28 or 1.6 gallons per flush.
- Kitchen sinks can use 1.8 gallon per minute, depending on the age of the faucet and the aerator.
- Most showerheads run between 1.8 and 2.5 gallons per minute, depending on the age of the showerhead.
- High-Efficiency clothes washers use 15-25 gallons per cycle.
- High-efficiency dishwashers can use 5 gallons or less per cycle.

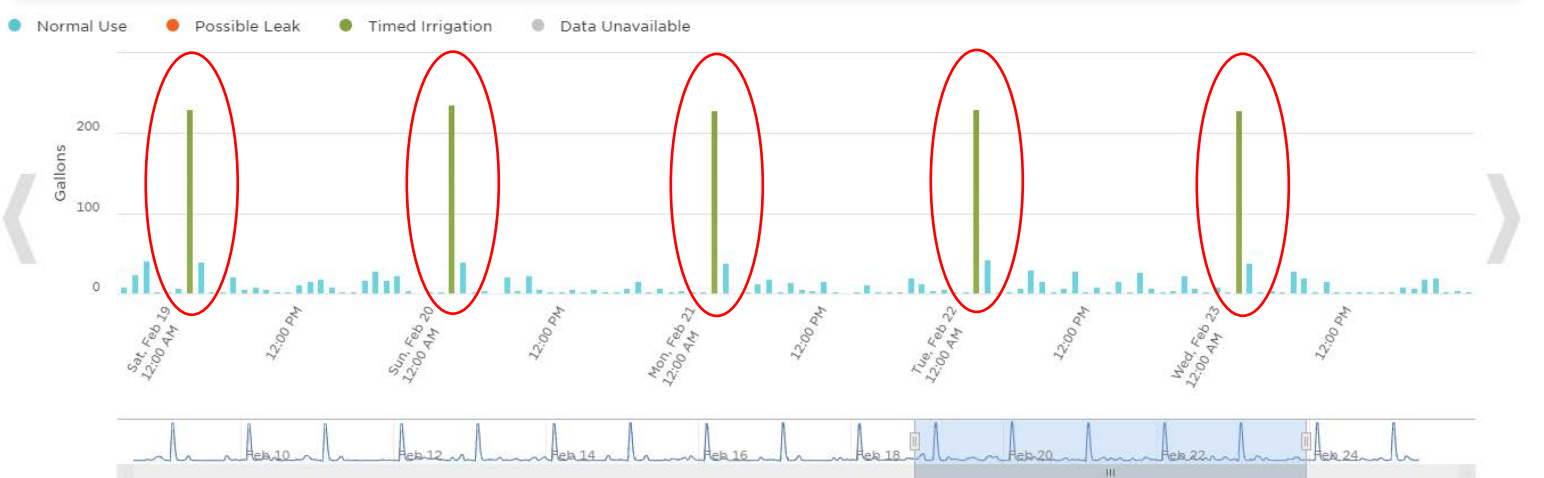
2. Check for leaks:

It’s possible you have a small or moderate leak, and your old meter had not been detecting it. Use the WaterSmart portal to look at your hourly usage. Is there anything that looks out of the ordinary? Does it show that you use 15 gallons per hour, every hour, even in the middle of the night? That is most likely a leak. Even small leaks can add up over a month, so it’s important to find and fix them in a timely manner. On the next page is an example of what a 13 gallon per hour leak would look like on WaterSmart.



3. Check for periods and patterns of high use:

Similar to leaks, look for patterns of high use with your hourly data in WaterSmart. Does it show that you use 200 gallons every morning at 3am? That pattern indicates a possible irrigation issue. It may be running for too long, or there may be a break or leak somewhere. If there is a pattern that has developed in your hourly usage, try to figure out what it means. There is likely room for improvement or change there. Below is an example of a pattern of high use.



4. Next Steps:

“Ok, my meter is correct. But I had no idea my water use was so high! What do I do?”

Visit our website to check out some of our customer tools, like the DIY Home Water Audit or “Find and Fix a Leak” page. Your WaterSmart portal will also be a useful tool for monitoring your water consumption in between bills. If you need further assistance, you can call the Water Conservation Office at 831-420-5230.

“I did all the steps, but I’m still not so sure that this new meter is right.”

If you have completed all of these steps and are still having doubts, please call Water Conservation at 831-420-5230.