

# LEAK GUIDE

HOW TO IDENTIFY PLUMBING LEAKS AT HOME

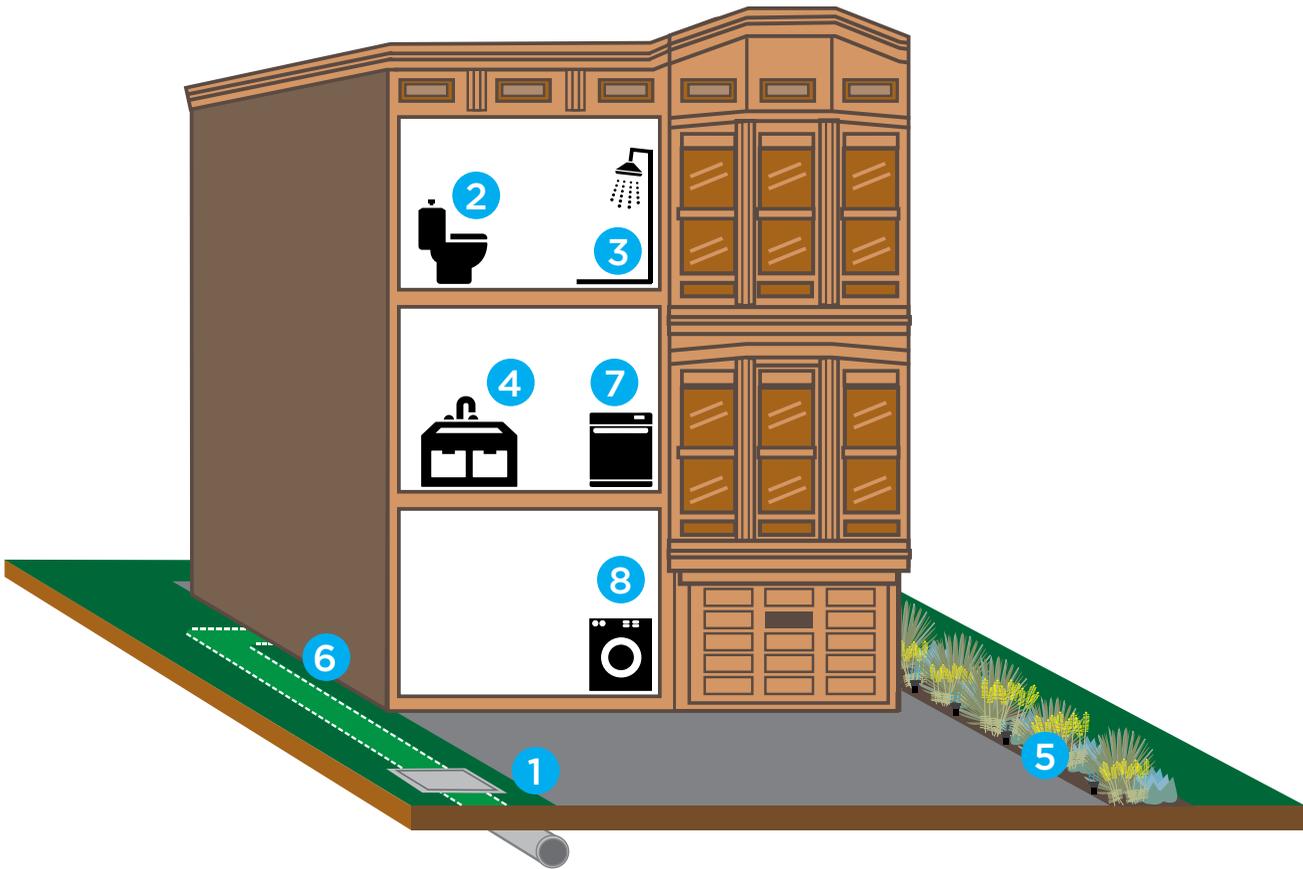


San Francisco  
**Water Power Sewer**

Services of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

# DO YOU HAVE A LEAK?

A home with plumbing leaks can lose over 70,000 gallons of water each year – that's enough water to fill a basketball court two feet deep! Toilets are the most common sources of household leaks, although leaks can also occur in faucets, irrigation systems, or even a home's main water service line. While most plumbing leaks can be easily repaired by a homeowner, they often go unnoticed and can waste thousands of gallons of water per month. This Leak Guide will help you identify common plumbing leaks and provide steps to make simple repairs yourself.



## WHERE TO START

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# MY ACCOUNT

Register for My Account at [myaccount-water.sfpuc.org](http://myaccount-water.sfpuc.org) to view your daily and hourly water use, identify unusual spikes in water use, and set up automatic bill payments.

Automated water meters serve nearly all of San Francisco's water accounts. This technology transmits hourly water use data to our automated meter reading system. Registered My Account users can download reports of their hourly, daily, and monthly water use. This timely water usage information allows you to monitor use and identify possible leaks quickly.

The screenshot shows the 'My Account' page for San Francisco Water Power Sewer. The header includes the logo and navigation links for 'MY ACCOUNT', 'BILLS & PAYMENTS', 'MY WATER USE', and 'QUESTIONS'. A banner at the top reads 'Providing high-quality, efficient and reliable water, power and sewer services 24/7'. The main content area is divided into three columns:

- My Account:** Displays account details such as 'Current Amount Due: \$259.00', 'Payment Due Date: 10/27/16', and 'Last Payment Received: \$277.54'. It includes a 'View My Bill' button and links for 'Bill & Payment History', 'Manage Multiple Accounts', 'Start or Stop a Service', and 'High Bill?'.
- My Daily Use:** Features a bar chart showing water usage in gallons from 7/07 to 7/13. The usage shows a significant spike on 7/12 and 7/13. A 'Download Report' button is present. A warning icon 'X' indicates 'Water use not available on this day. Learn more.' and another note states 'Water usage evenly distributed over the period when meter read data was not fully available. Learn more.' A red bar at the bottom represents the 'Drought Water Use Target'.
- Monthly Billed Use:** Explains that 'Monthly billed use displays the water use reported on bills you have already received.' It also includes a 'Daily Use' section with a note: 'Daily Use displays more recent water use not yet validated or reported on your bill. Daily use data available starting on May 1, 2014. Click here if you do not see a Daily Use page.' Below this is a section for 'Automated Water Meters' with an image of a meter.

Large spikes in water use can indicate that your property has a plumbing leak.

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## Useful My Account features:

- **Household usage review** - In recent years, San Francisco residents have used a little over 40 gallons of water per person per day. View your household's daily water use and calculate how your home compares to the average.
- **Leak detection** - Use the **"MY WATER USE"** menu to view the **"My Daily Use"** and **"My Hourly Use"** charts. Modify your water usage chart by picking a recent date when no one was at home. If water use occurred on that date, you may have a leak or you may have accidentally left an irrigation system on.
- **Irrigation usage review** - If you have an automatic irrigation system, view your daily water use chart to determine how much water is used for landscape irrigation by comparing your watering days to your non-watering days. Most gardens in San Francisco can get by with watering 2-3 days per week from April through October.

## Leak Alerts

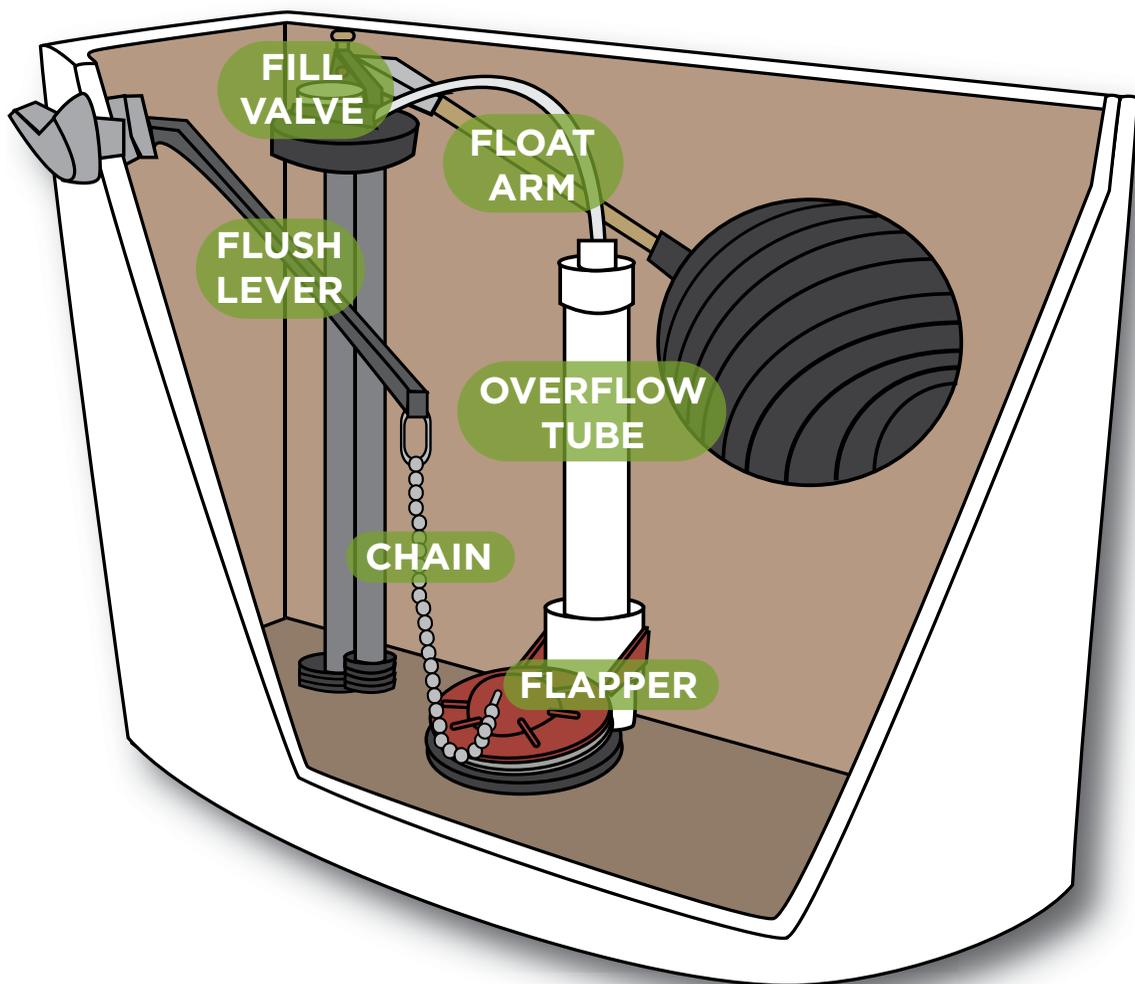
Learn more about how we identify leaks and send leak alerts at [sfpuc.org/fixleaks](https://sfpuc.org/fixleaks).

### Water Meters

To prevent personal injury and damage to SFPUC equipment, water meters should only be accessed by SFPUC field staff. To request a courtesy site visit from an SFPUC representative, contact Customer Services at **415-551-3000**. This site visit will include a check of your water meter, as well as additional information about how the meter registers and transmits water usage information.

# TOILET

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A leaking toilet is the #1 cause of a high water bill. In many cases, a toilet leak is silent unless you know the signs. Below are the most common leaks associated with a toilet.

### Loose Handle

Does the handle feel loose every time you flush the toilet? If so, the nut inside the tank may be loose.

- Remove the toilet lid and tighten the nut so that the flush handle is tight but moves freely when used. Make sure that the flapper does not get stuck open when the toilet is flushed.

### Leaking Fill Valve

Remove the toilet lid from the tank and mark the water level with a pencil. Flush the toilet. When the tank refills, the water level should return to the marked line.

- If the tank's water level fills above or below the marked line, adjust the water level in the tank so that the water shuts off 1-inch below the overflow tube.

**Tip: SFPUC provides free toilet dye tabs, flappers, and fill valves when you schedule a Water-Wise Evaluation.**

### Leaking Flapper

Drop a dye tablet or several drops of food coloring into the tank and wait 15 minutes. If colored water appears in the bowl, the toilet's flapper is leaking.

- Disconnect the old rubber flapper and install a new one. Flappers do not last forever so periodically check for deterioration over time.

### Running Toilet

Do you jiggle the handle to keep the toilet from running? If yes, the flush lever and chain, or the handle itself may be sticking.

- Adjust the nut that secures the flush lever in the toilet tank. If that does not work, the handle may have to be replaced.

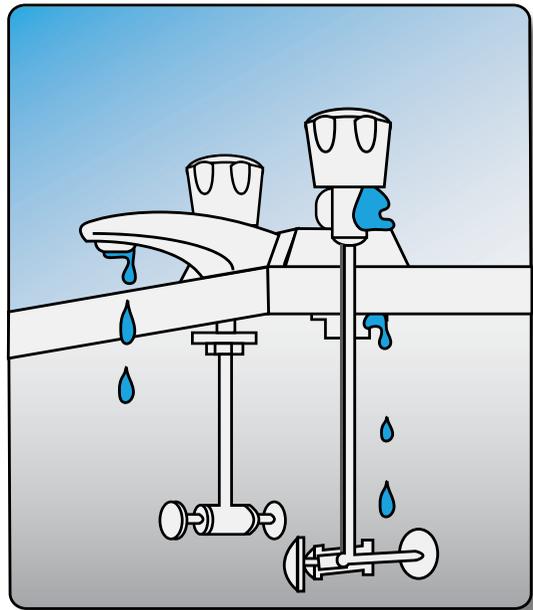


# SHOWER & SINK FAUCET

- Does your faucet or showerhead leak when not in use?
- Does the showerhead leak around the joints when in use?
- Does water leak out of the tub spout while showering?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you may need to make simple repairs, such as replacing a worn washer from your faucet, replacing the shower diverter, or adding plumber’s tape to minimize leaks between the shower arm and showerhead.

**Tip: The SFPUC provides free EPA WaterSense certified showerheads that are water-efficient and provide an enjoyable shower experience!**



# IRRIGATION SYSTEM

If you are watering in the late evening or early morning (which is recommended to avoid evaporation), it can be challenging to identify irrigation leaks caused by a broken sprinkler head or even an underground irrigation pipe. Here are a few signs that you may have an irrigation leak:

**Unusual ponding or standing water in your garden.** During the day, look for areas of your garden that are especially green and saturated or have standing water. If you see an unusually wet area, you may have a broken irrigation pipe.

 If you like to repair things yourself, dig down to the irrigation pipe and assess if it can be repaired with a pipe clamp, or if a section of pipe needs to be cut out and replaced. If a simple fix cannot resolve the problem, contact a gardener or an irrigation specialist.

**Broken sprinkler.** Turn on your irrigation system and visually inspect sprinkler heads and/or drip emitters for any damage such as clogs, leaks, or faulty heads that may be broken or misdirected. Sprinkler heads that do not pop up and spray may be an indicator of an underground leak. If you have a drip system, listen carefully to detect any missing emitters.

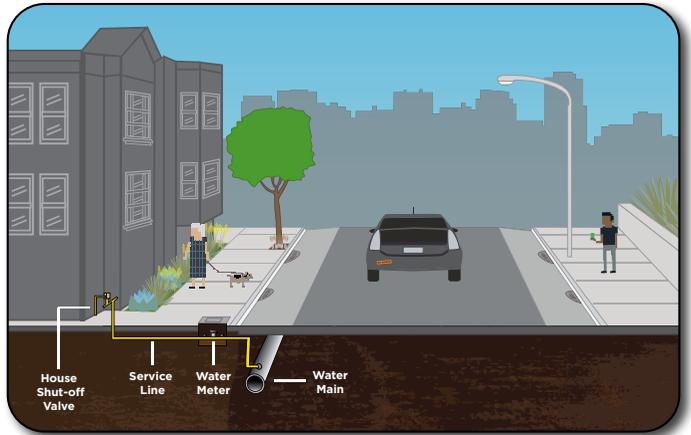


 Repair or replace any broken sprinkler heads or drip components. Most parts are easily found at local hardware stores.

**Tip:** *If your garden is on a slope, use sprinkler heads with a built-in check valve to prevent water from draining out of the lowest heads when the system is off.*

# SERVICE LINE

Your water service line (also referred to as the “house pipe” or “supply line”) is located underground and brings water into your home from the SFPUC’s water main. This pipe begins at the water meter and typically includes a main shut-off valve before it enters your home’s plumbing system. Depending on the age and material of your service line, leaks can occur and go unnoticed.



**Locate your service line.** Inspect where the line enters the home and check for leaks or listen for running water. A service line with a significant leak may cause standing water or ponding on the ground surface above the line, similar to a broken irrigation pipe. Lateral Insurance is available to all SFPUC homeowners – see <https://www.awrusa.com/SanFrancisco>

## OTHER PLACES TO FIND LEAKS

All water-using devices, appliances, and equipment have the potential to leak or waste water. Visually inspect other water-using devices, such as:

- Outdoor hose faucets
- Refrigerators
- Fountains & Ponds
- Water heaters
- Air conditioning units
- Irrigation valves

State and local law prohibits non-recirculating fountains and decorative water features. Remove or replace any that are not recirculating.

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## Dishwasher

A flexible tube or hose is used to supply hot water to the dishwasher. It usually runs under the kitchen sink between the dishwasher and the faucet's hot water supply line. If the water supply to the dishwasher is leaking, the tube or hose can be replaced or the fittings can be tightened.

### How to Identify a Leak:

- Water accumulated on the floor near or under your dishwasher when it's running is usually a sign of a leak. Read your dishwasher manual and ensure that the washer has been operating according to the instructions.

If you can't locate the leak after checking all indoor and outdoor plumbing fixtures, it is possible that you may have an underground leak in your service pipe. Contact your local plumber or a leak detection specialist to locate and repair the blind leak. Repairs to the water service line should be completed by a licensed professional. To request that your water service be shut off to make repairs, contact the **SFPUC Customer Services** at **(415) 551-3000**.

## Clothes Washer

The hot and cold flexible water supply lines to your clothes washer have screens that can clog. Unscrew the supply lines, clean the screens and reattach. If flow is still restricted, check to see if the shut-off valves are fully open. If the hot water flow is still low, the inlet valve of the water heater may be partially turned off.

### How to Identify a Leak:

- Does your washing machine leak water on the ground or drip down the outside of the machine when it's in use? A leak may be caused by a loose or cracked hose or inlet valve.

# WATER CONSERVATION PROGRAMS

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) provides high quality and reliable drinking water to 2.7 million residents and businesses. While a faucet leak or broken sprinkler may not seem like an immediate call to action, a leak of any size is a waste of our valuable water supplies. The SFPUC offers several resources to help you save water and money.



**Water-Wise Evaluation** – Sign up for a free indoor and outdoor water assessment. Our experienced technicians will help identify leaks, provide free plumbing devices, and inform you of available financial incentives.



**Free Plumbing Devices** – water-efficient plumbing devices, such as showerheads, faucet aerators, and toilet leak detection dye tablets are available when you schedule a Water-Wise Evaluation or for pick up at the SFPUC Customer Service counter at 525 Golden Gate Avenue.



**Clothes Washer Rebate** – Receive a rebate for replacing your old, inefficient clothes washer with a high-efficiency model.



**Free Toilet Replacement** – For a limited time, we are offering free high-efficiency toilets with free installation to eligible homes and apartment buildings that have toilets using 3.5 gallons per flush or more.



**Discounted Rainwater Harvesting/Laundry-to-Landscape Kits** – Apply for a discount on rain barrels or cisterns, as well as a graywater kit that includes the parts necessary to re-use water from your clothes washer to irrigate landscape.

Visit: [sfpub.org/savewater](https://sfpub.org/savewater)

Email: [waterconservation@sfpuc.org](mailto:waterconservation@sfpuc.org)

Call: **(415) 551-4730**