

HIGH WATER BILLS: WHAT YOU CAN DO



Have you recently found yourself staring at your water bill in disbelief, thinking, “How could I have used that much water?” An unusually high water bill is most often caused by a leak or change in water use.

Water Leak Check Service

Customers with unusually high water use can call the city for a leak check. It is best if the customer is present during the leak check. The Hailey Water Division will observe your water meter while all water sources are turned off at your home. If the meter dial is turning during this initial check, you have a leak.

To help isolate where the leak is in the system, you can turn off the main shut off valve inside your home and the Hailey Water Division can again observe the water meter. If the meter dial is still turning, you have a leak underground in the service line and may have to contact a professional for repairs. If the meter dial is not turning, you know that the leak is in the household plumbing.

The irrigation system can be checked in a similar manner. If you are present during the leak check, you can turn off the main irrigation shut off valve and the Hailey Water Division can determine if the leak is in the irrigation system.

When allowed by law, the city makes adjustments to utility bills for customers who repair leaks promptly. Please see the reverse side for more information.

If No Leak Is Detected

If you do not have a water leak but still have concerns about your utility bill, you may request an on-site meter inspection. The Hailey Water Division will visit the location and:

- ◆ Confirm meter and transponder number matches customer’s account number
- ◆ Perform these inspection steps in the meter box:
 1. Is low-flow indicator turning?
 2. Is there water in the box? If yes, does it impact the bill?
 3. Take visual reading on register.
 4. Use handheld to confirm transponder reading matches register reading.
 5. Flow water through meter.
 6. Take visual reading on register.
 7. Use handheld to again confirm transponder reading matches register reading.
 8. Discuss results with the customer, or leave a door hanger with results.

Potential Causes of High Water Bills

- ◆ Leaking toilet, or a toilet that continues to run after being flushed
- ◆ Dripping faucet (indoor or out) or leaking hot water heater
- ◆ Leak in the automatic irrigation system
- ◆ Leak in the water service line between the meter and your home
- ◆ Watering the lawn, new grass, or trees; or open hose bib
- ◆ Change in the number of people in the household (guests, etc.)
- ◆ Caretaker watering the property or changing the irrigation system settings
- ◆ Automatic devices such as irrigation controllers and water softening systems working improperly
- ◆ Seasonal change in water use habits

The city’s *Low Water Use Action Plan* publication can help homeowners find ways to lower their water bills.

If No Meter Problems Are Found

If no leak is found and the on-site meter inspection does not uncover any problems, the customer is responsible to pay the water bill. The City of Hailey does not require full payment of the bill for properties with unusually high water use until the leak check service and on-site meter inspection are complete. Customers are required to pay their average bill amount to keep in good standing during the leak check and inspection process.

Utility Bill Credits for Leak Repairs

If a leak was identified and repaired by you, you may be eligible for a credit on your utility bill. In general, the following process and criteria are used to determine if a customer will receive a credit.

- ◆ The city must be notified of the leak for the user to be eligible for a credit (or the city notifies the water user of the leak).
- ◆ The credit period begins 30 days prior to notification until 60 days following notification.
- ◆ The leak must be repaired during the 60 days following notification.
- ◆ If the leak is not repaired during the 60 days following notification, you are not eligible for a credit.
- ◆ If the leak is repaired during the first 30 days following notification, the credit is based on your water usage during the same period the previous year, or the actual metered quantity, whichever is less.
- ◆ If the leak is repaired between 30 and 60 days following notification, the credit is calculated in the same manner, minus 50% (it pays to repair leaks promptly).
- ◆ You must notify the city of any leak repair and requested bill adjustment within 90 days of the repair.
- ◆ Receipts documenting the repair must be provided.
- ◆ A maximum of 2 credits will be given within a 12 month period.

This is a summary only. For the full text of the ordinance, go to www.haileycityhall.org and navigate to *Water Service Concerns* on the Water Division page.

Contact Information

- ⇒ Water Leak Checks and Utility Bill Questions
788-9830, ext. 22
- ⇒ Public Works Department
788-9830, ext. 20



Can I Have My Meter Tested?

The city does not have the resources in-house to test meters, and it would be very costly to incur charges for third-party testing. Please note that **it is extremely rare for a meter to over-read consumption**, as meters tend to slow down as they age.

Because of the normal slowdown of meters over long periods of time, the city spot tests the oldest cohort of meters every 3 to 5 years. When meters are replaced, water use readings (and the water bill) will go up because of increased meter accuracy.

