

LEAK GUIDE

Finding and Fixing Leaks at Home



San Francisco
Water Power Sewer

Services of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

Did You Get a Leak Alert?

Leaks are common and can happen to anyone at any time. Many plumbing leaks can be easily repaired, but they often go unnoticed. 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!

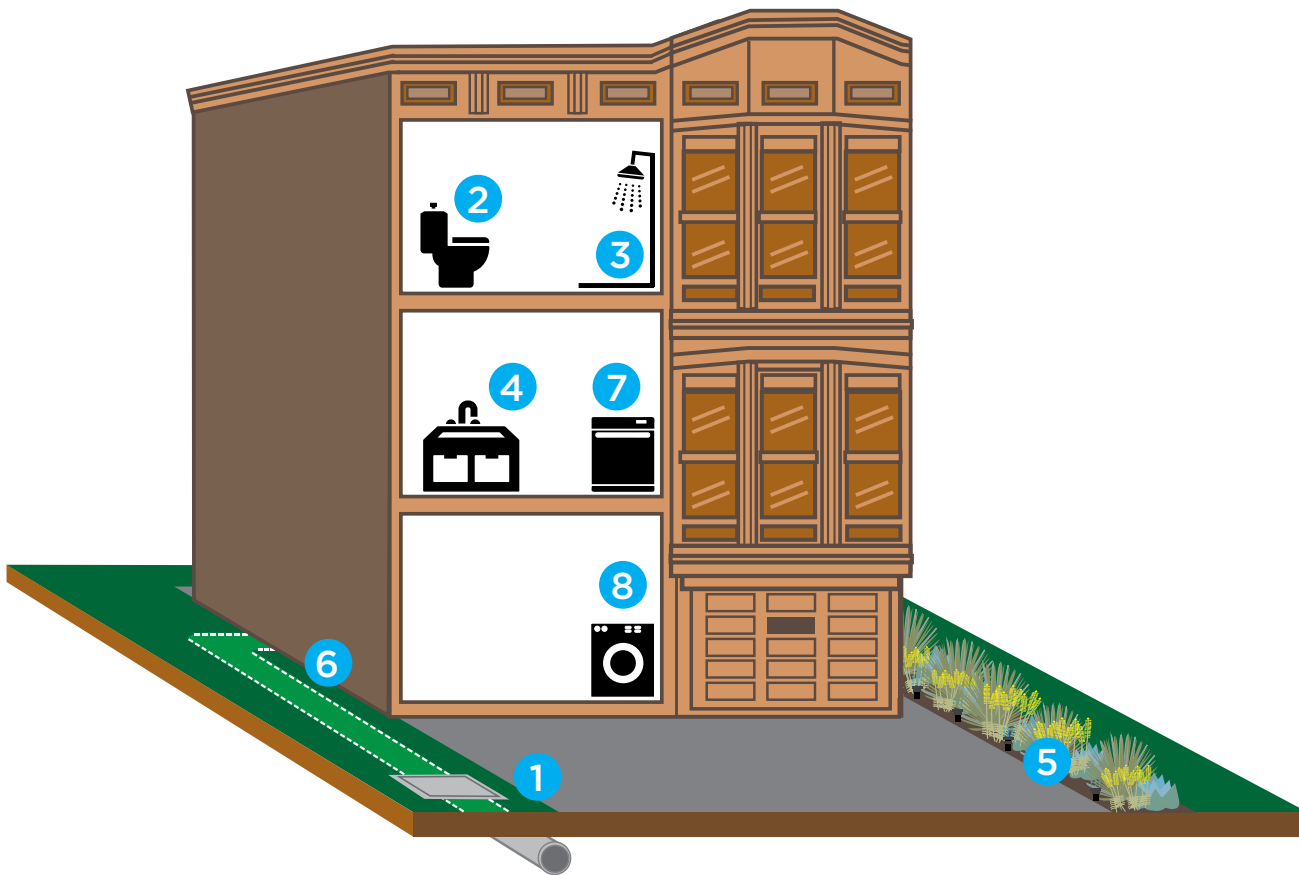
The SFPUC's Leak Alert Program can help our customers find and fix leaks faster. While we provide tools and resources as a courtesy to help, it is your responsibility to find and fix leaks on your property.

This Leak Guide will help you find common plumbing leaks in homes and small properties. It will also provide steps to make simple repairs yourself.

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Learn more about our Leak Alert Program at sfpuc.gov/fixleaks

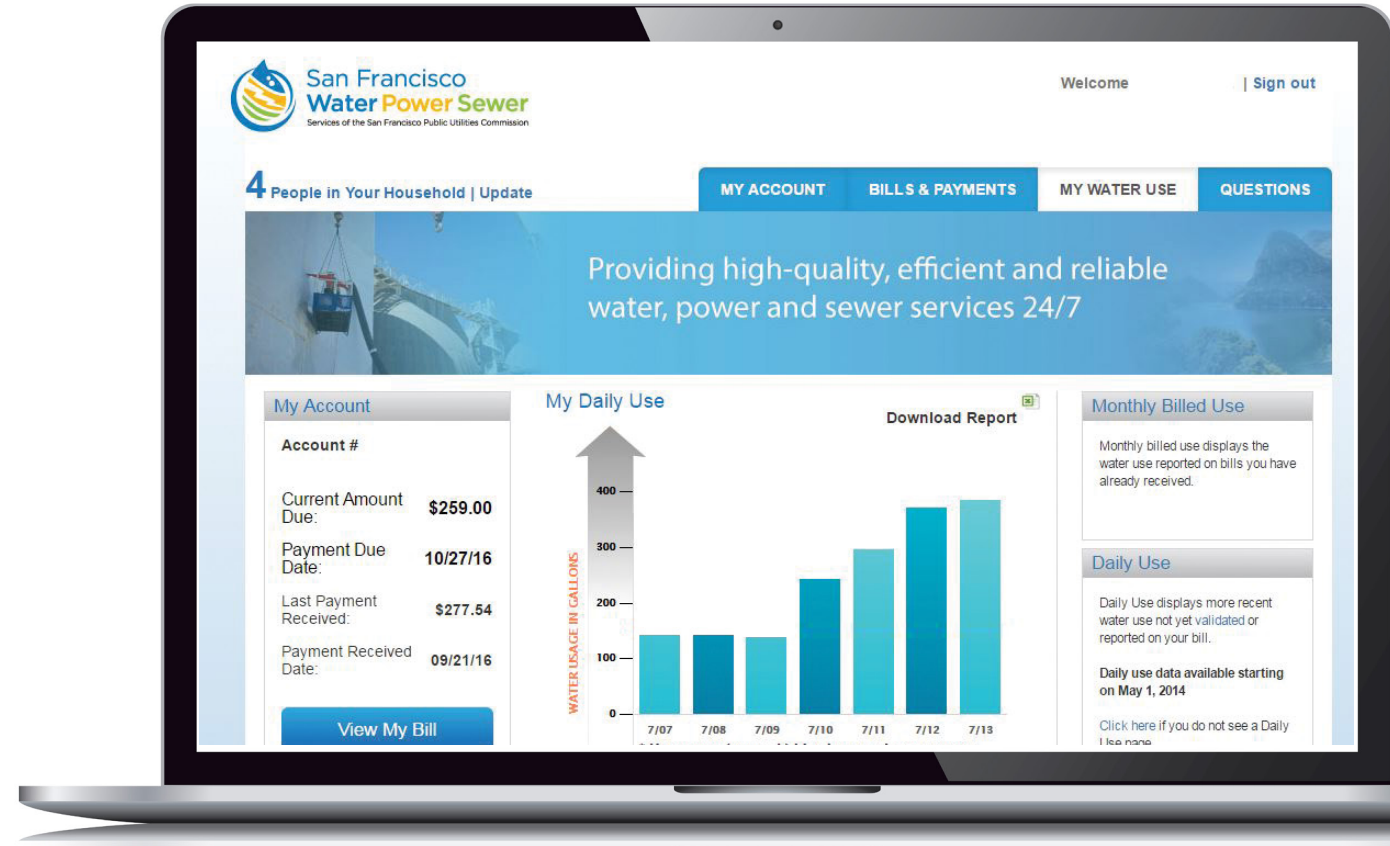


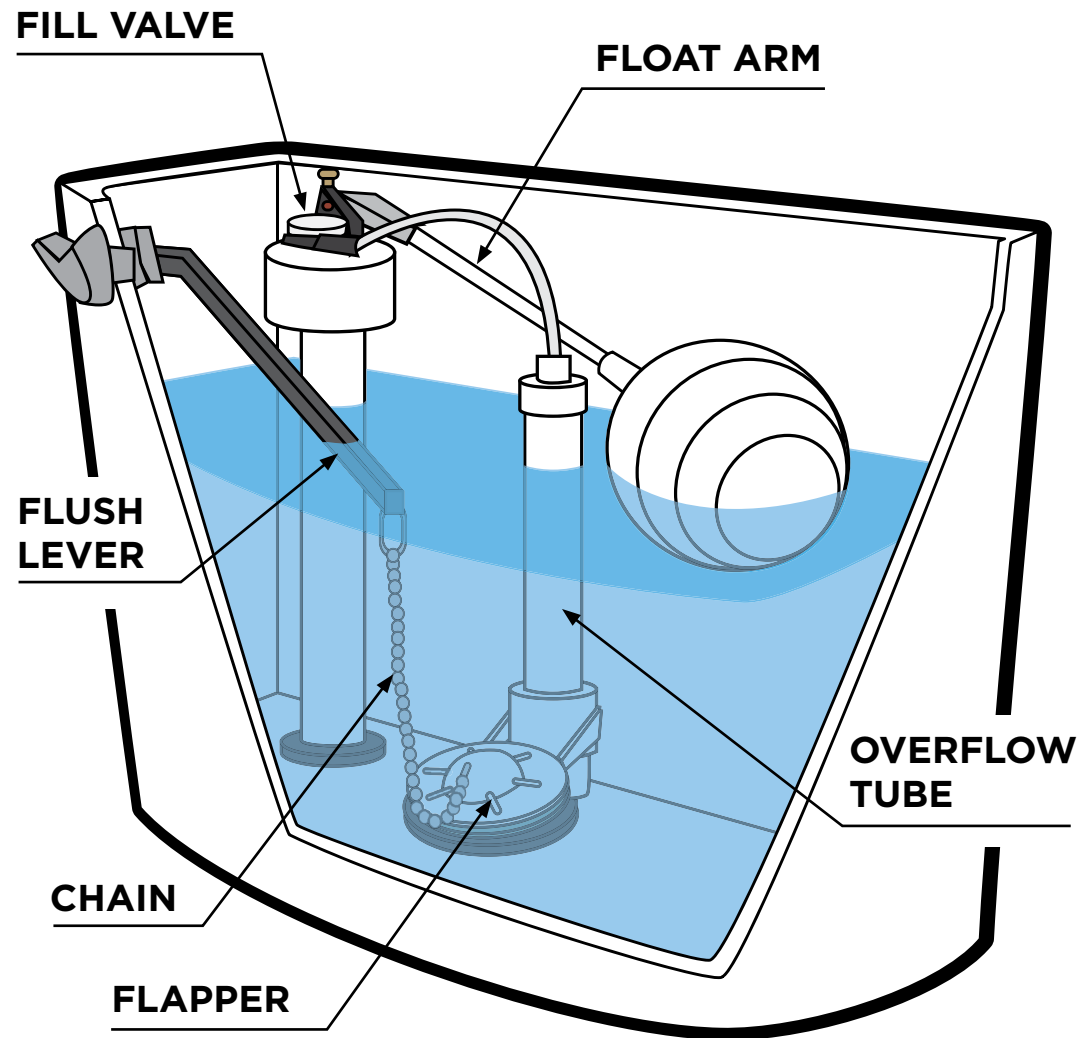
My Account

You can check if your constant usage is ongoing by registering for My Account at myaccount-water.sfpuc.org. Automated water meters transmit hourly water use data to our system.

Useful My Account Features:

- **Update your contact information** with your cell phone or email to get notified of possible leaks faster.
- **View your daily and hourly water use:** Most San Francisco residents use about 40 gallons of water per person per day. See how your home compares to the average.
- **Find leaks:** from the “My Water Use” menu, view “My Daily Use” and “My Hourly Use” charts. Select a recent date when no one was at home. If you see water use on that date, you may have a leak. Or, you may have accidentally left an irrigation system on.
- **View water usage from irrigation.** If you have an automatic irrigation system, you can go to your daily water use chart and compare how much water is used on watering days to non-watering days.






Toilets are the most common sources of household leaks and are 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.


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 make sure to check for deterioration over time.

Running Toilet

Do you jiggle the handle to keep the toilet from running? If so, 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.

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

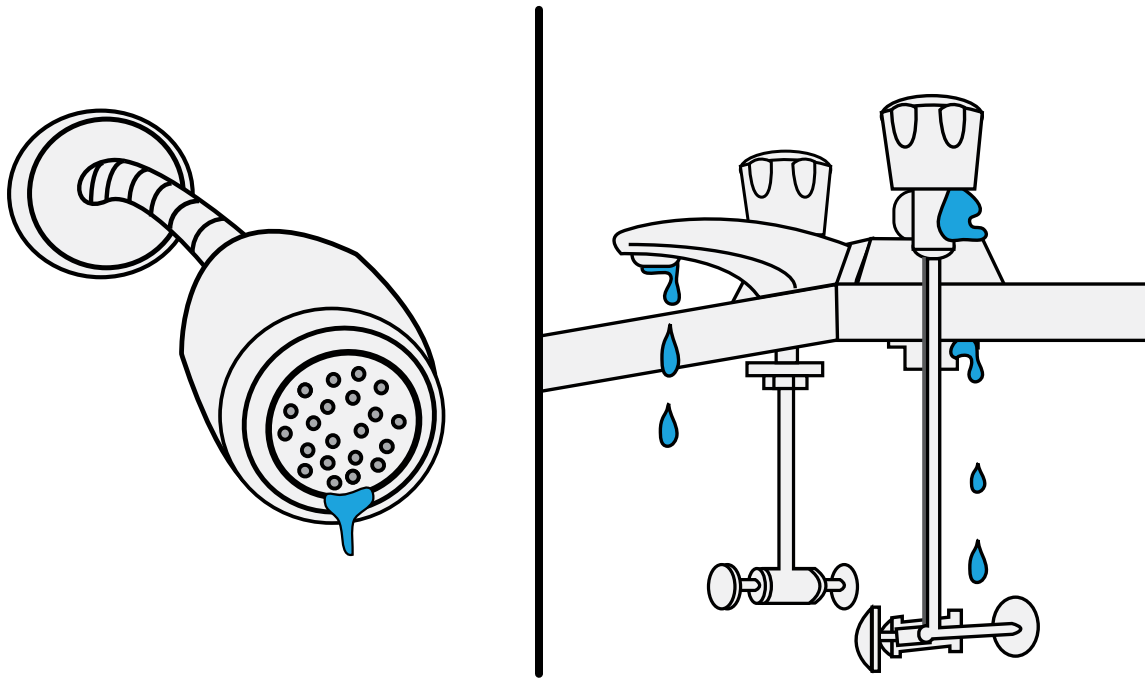


Shower and Sink Faucet

- 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. These could include:

- Replacing a worn washer from your faucet
- Replacing the shower diverter
- Adding plumber’s tape to reduce leaks between the shower arm and showerhead.



Tip: The SFPUC provides free water-efficient showerheads. They provide an enjoyable shower experience!

Irrigation System

It’s recommended to water in the late evening or early morning to avoid evaporation. It can be hard to find leaks caused by a broken sprinkler head or an underground 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. Also check for standing water. If you see an unusually wet area, you may have a broken irrigation pipe.



You may be able to repair the pipe yourself. To check, first dig down to the pipe. Then, see if you can fix it with a pipe clamp. You may need to cut out and replace a section of the pipe. If you are not able to fix it, contact a gardener or irrigation specialist.

Broken sprinkler. To check your sprinkler, first turn on your irrigation system. Then, look at the sprinkler heads or drip emitters. Check for any damage such as clogs, leaks, or faulty heads that may be broken or misdirected. You may have an underground leak if your sprinkler heads do not pop up and spray. If you have a drip system, listen to find any missing emitters.



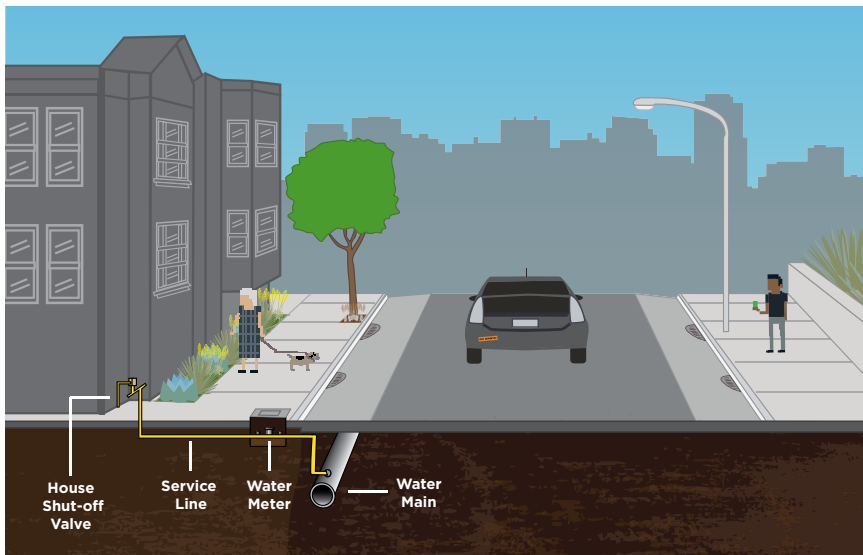
Repair or replace any broken sprinkler heads or drip components. Most parts are easily found at local hardware stores.



Tip: Is your garden on a slope? Try using sprinkler heads with a built-in check valve. This will prevent water from draining out of the lowest heads when the system is off.

Service Line

Your water service line is also referred as the “house pipe” or “supply line.” It is located underground and brings water into your home from the SFPUC’s water main. The service line begins at the water meter. It usually 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. Find where your service line enters the home. Then, check for leaks or listen for running water. A service line with a major leak may cause standing water or ponding on the surface above the service line. This may look like a broken irrigation pipe. Service line repairs require the help of a licensed plumber.

Water Meters

Please do not access water meters. This is to prevent personal injury and damage to SFPUC equipment. SFPUC field staff are the only ones that should access water meters. To request a free site visit from an SFPUC employee, contact Customer Services at 415-551-3000. This site visit will include a check of your water meter. It will also provide information about how the meter reads and sends water usage data.

Other Places to Find Leaks

Any device that uses water may have a leak. Make sure to check other devices that use water, such as:

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

State and local law requires fountains and decorative water features to be recirculating. Remove or replace any that are not recirculating.

Dishwasher

How to Identify a Leak:

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.

- Is there water pooling on the floor near or under your dishwasher when it’s running? That’s usually a sign of a leak.

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.

- 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.

How to Identify a Leak:

Are you still unable to find the leak after checking indoor and outdoor fixtures? This means you may have an underground leak in your service pipe. Contact your local plumber or a leak detection specialist to locate and repair the leak. Only licensed professionals should make repairs to the water service line. To request that your water service be shut off for repairs, contact SFPUC Customer Services at (415) 551-3000.

Water Conservation Programs

A leak of any size is a waste of valuable drinking water. The SFPUC offers several resources to help you save water and money.

Water Wise Evaluation: we provide specialized water efficiency recommendations for your home, business or landscape, and help replace older water-using fixtures with more efficient ones. A Water-Wise Evaluation includes:

- Help to identify leaks
- Free plumbing devices
- Information about our rebates and incentives

Free devices: kitchen and bathroom faucet aerators, showerheads, garden spray nozzles, and more!

Rebates: washers, commercial equipment, rain barrels, graywater systems, and more!

For a complete guide to all our programs and services, visit: sfpub.gov/savewater

Email: waterconservation@sfpuc.org

Call: (415) 551-4730



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