



# Town of Wayland Massachusetts

## Board of Public Works & Department of Public Works High Water Bills & Water Abatement Guidelines

Please note: If you qualify for abatement based on existing income or hardship programs, the abatement will be handled administratively – please call us at the number below.

<b>Situation:</b>	<p>You have received a high water bill and you don't understand why.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Did you use that much water?</li><li>- Do you have a leak?</li><li>- Could there be something wrong with the meter or the reading?</li><li>- Was there a change in the number of people in your household?</li></ul> <p><b><i>Don't wait to take action!</i></b></p>
<b>Initial Checks:</b>	<p><i>Is your usage significantly higher than for the same season last year?</i> Check your bill against a previous bill in the same time period – or call us and ask what your prior bills were.</p> <p><i>What changed?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Did you install an irrigation system?</li><li>- Did you water your lawn or garden more than in years past?</li><li>- Are there new persons in the household?</li><li>- Have you added or changed appliances?</li><li>- Are you washing your automobiles or boats outside?</li></ul> <p><i>Strategies for identifying leaks:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Check for leaking toilets – the #1 cause of excess water usage</b> – drop dye tablets (available from the DPW) in the toilet tank. Let stand for a few hours. If the dark color reaches the bowl before flushing – call the plumber, your toilet is leaking.</li><li>• <b>Does your meter run with all water off?</b> Turn off all taps, irrigation systems, and sources of water use. If the triangle or dials are still moving on your water meter or you hear water running through the meter, you have a leak. Call a plumber.</li><li>• <b>A below-ground irrigation system can leak silently.</b> Check for damp spots in irrigated areas. Read your meter each morning for a few days then shut off the irrigation system; see if usage goes down in the next couple days.</li></ul>

<p><b>Next Steps:</b></p>	<p><i>If you've not found the source of the extra water usage:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Read your meter daily and try to relate usage to some activity.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Check outside hoses.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Have your irrigation company check a below-ground irrigation system.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Have a plumber check your system and fix the leak or document that no leak was found.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ask DPW to change the meter if it reads over 200,000 cubic feet (no charge).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If you believe you've ruled out toilets and irrigation systems, call the DPW at the number below to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ see if we have any other suggestions for your situation, or</li> <li>○ schedule a water worker to check your system.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Please advise us if you are not able to pay the bill in full when it is due.</p>
<p><b>Requesting Abatement:</b></p>	<p>If you've found the source of the problem, and it's been corrected (or for seasonal reasons will be corrected later), please write a letter to the Department of Public Works. Please:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> explain what you believe was wrong, and what you did to correct it,</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> explain how it was fixed, or when it will be fixed if it cannot be fixed immediately,</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> include receipts for the completed work or inspections, and</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> request the abatement you believe is fair and explain why.</li> </ul> <p>An abatement hearing will be scheduled for you before the Board of Public Works. Please attend this 10-15 minute hearing in person. If you are unable to attend a hearing due to physical impairments, please advise us.</p>
<p><b>Abatement Hearing:</b></p>	<p>Someone from our office will contact you with the date and time of your hearing. Please come a few minutes early and bring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> a copy of your letter to the DPW,</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> your recent water bills,</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> receipts from your irrigation company or plumber for repairs, and</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> any inspection reports from your irrigation company or plumber.</li> </ul> <p>Your abatement request will be heard by the Board of Public Works. The Board will consider your request, whether the problem has existed in the past, how long before you began to address the problem, whether you've made good faith efforts to correct it, and your payment history.</p> <p>Abatements are normally considered only for the most recent water bill. Abatements may be granted by re-calculating some portion of your water use at a lower rate tier, or by forgiving a quantity of water used based on your historical usage from the same season in prior years.</p> <p>The board may grant your abatement as requested, deny your request, partially grant your request, or delay action until the next billing cycle in the same season shows the problem has been corrected.</p> <p>The board's actions may be conditional on your taking additional steps to correct the problem. The board does not grant abatements for recurring, unresolved issues.</p>

## **For Your Information:**

***High water usage is the result of water running through your meter.***

We read your water meter only twice a year. If you develop a leak in your system, you may not be aware of it until up to six months later when you receive your water bill

A good way to track your water usage is to jot down your water reading weekly or monthly and compare to previous readings. If you see an unexplained spike in your usage finding and fixing the problem early can prevent a very large water bill.

When your irrigation is turned on for the season it is a very good idea to jot down the meter reading along with the date. Check and compare readings over the next couple of weeks. If you notice an unexplained spike in usage, check your irrigation system.

***The number one cause of water leaks is a leaky toilet.*** Even a small amount of water running 24 hours per day can cause water usage to be 3 to 4 times the normal amount.

We will make every effort to help you identify the source of your water usage and treat you fairly.

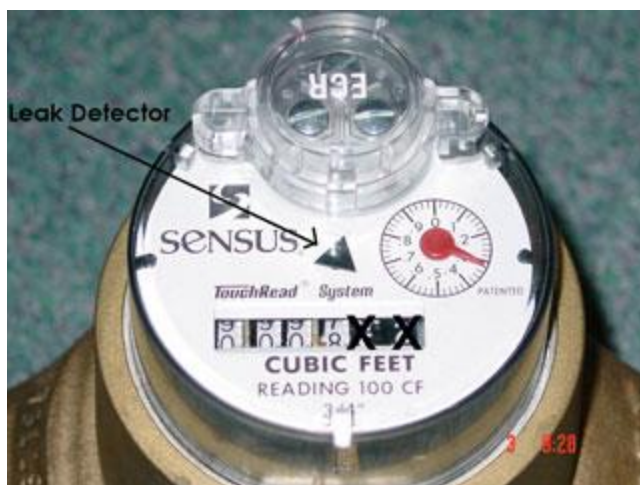
In future years we hope to use new metering technology to advise you of significant water use changes in a few days – so you'll find out before it becomes a billing issue, and we can conserve water and avoid abatements.

**Contact us at: 508-358-3672**

**Email us at: [kpeters@wayland.ma.us](mailto:kpeters@wayland.ma.us)**

## Reading your water meter:

Different meters will appear slightly different, but the method of reading them is the same.



- One (1) cubic foot of water equals 7.48 gallons
- When reading your meter, ignore the numbers in black as they are not used for billing purposes. Billing is done in units of 100 cubic feet. Thus, if your bill indicates usage of “8” units. This equates to “800 cubic feet”.
- There is usually some sort of “leak detector” on your meter. Typically a small triangle or “gear” that spins when even the smallest amount of water passes through the meter. If you have turned off all water but still see this leak detector spinning, you should check your home for leaks (the most common culprit is a leaking toilet).

To check your average water consumption, simply get an initial read and then an ending read. **For example**, on Monday you check your meter and it reads “84” (remember – don’t count the numbers in black). Next Monday you check your meter and it reads “87”. Here is how to calculate your water usage:

$$\text{Ending Read} - \text{Beginning Read} * 100 = \text{Cubic Feet Used}$$

$$\text{Cubic Feet Used} * 7.48 = \text{Gallons Used}$$

$$\text{Gallons Used} / \# \text{ days between reads} = \text{gallons per day}$$

### Example:

$$87 - 84 * 100 = 300 \text{ cubic feet used}$$

$$300 \text{ cubic feet} * 7.48 \text{ gallons/cubic foot} = 2244 \text{ gallons used}$$

$$2244 \text{ gallons} / 7 \text{ days} = 320 \text{ gallons used per day (gpd)}$$