

HOW TO CHECK FOR A WATER LEAK

1 Toilets

Check the toilet for leaks by removing the top off the tank and listening very closely. If you hear any hissing at all, try to locate where it is coming from. If you locate the area where the leak is coming from, assess it and determine if you can fix it. If you can't, call a plumber.

- If nothing is noticeable, put a couple of drops of food coloring in the tank (not the bowl). Wait several minutes. If you have coloring in the bowl, you have a leak in the flapper at the bottom of the tank that is allowing water to seep through. At this point, you can assess whether you want to do the repair yourself or call a plumber.



2 Hot Water Tanks

Check the pressure relief valve on the hot water tank. Sometimes these valves are plumbed directly into a drain and may be leaking without your knowledge. If you can't remove the drain pipe to check for a leak, listen for a hissing sound. It may be leaking.



3 One Other Easy Check

Once you've checked these two common sources of leaks inside the house and determined that neither is the source, there is one additional easy step for determining that you do indeed have a leak.

Turn off all faucets, inside and out, and be sure that no toilets are running. Next, go out to your meter and check to see whether it is turning. If your meter is turning with no water intentionally running somewhere in your house or on your property, there is a leak on the property side of the meter.

4 Meter Line

Check the line running from the meter to the house. While this may sound difficult, you can save money if *you* can locate the leak for the plumber.

- If you know you have a shut-off valve by the house, shut it off temporarily and check the meter by removing the lid and watching the dial on top of the meter.
- If you can't see the meter head, try digging around because they sometimes have dirt or grass covering the top of them. Once you locate it and the valve is turned off by the house, watch the meter to see if it is turning. If it is still turning, then the leak is between the meter and the shut-off valve. That is, unless you have a leaking valve, and this is very common with older bronze gate valves, then your leak may also be inside the house.
- At this point, walk the area between the meter and the shut-off valve. Look for signs of a leak such as soft muddy areas, or grass that is greener than the rest or growing much faster than other areas. If you see such an obvious sign, call the plumber or assess whether you can make a repair yourself.
- If you have the valve shut off at the house and the meter has stopped moving, then the leak is somewhere in the house. Try some other techniques to try to locate the problem.



5 Hose Bibs

Try to locate a leak near the house. This will require you to locate all the hose-bibs. (Hose-bibs are the outside faucets that you hook your hoses to, in case you were unsure.) Usually an average residence has one hose-bib in the front and one in the back, but be sure to find and check all of them.



- Once you have located them, take a screwdriver, preferably one long enough to give yourself room to work, and put the metal tip of the screwdriver directly on the metal part of the hose-bib. Put your thumb knuckle on the top of the screwdriver, and then place your knuckle on the side of your head, immediately in front of your ear. The sound will travel directly to your eardrum. The idea, here, is for the solid screwdriver to work like a stethoscope. This works for most metal valves, as well.
- Listen carefully for any sound emitting from the hose-bib. If you hear anything at all, remember where it is (perhaps mark it with chalk), and go to the next one. If the sound emitted gets louder at any of the other hose-bibs, then the leak is closer to that particular unit. Note that and contact your plumber. Giving the plumber this information will save the plumber loads of time in finding the leak, which in turn saves you money.

6 Other Leaks

Check the garden. Look at hoses, taps, and drip irrigation systems. Check shower heads for leaks. These should be fairly straightforward home repairs if one is the source of a leak.



7 Near Enough is Helpful

Recognize that in many cases a leak can be very hard to locate. Not all of the leaks outlined in this article can be located and if you're not familiar with the location of plumbing, you may miss something easily. All the same, if you try these steps, you should be able to find an *approximate location* and this is a most valuable exercise in itself because it will help the plumber (many plumbers do not like searching for a problem so anything you can do they will appreciate), making it time saving for the plumber and that translates into savings for you.

Who is responsible for repairing a leak?

The City of Forks will repair leaks occurring on City-owned lines between water valves and private meters, and up to one (1) foot from the meter on the property side, at no cost to property owners or residents. Property owners or residents are responsible for repairing leaks occurring more than one foot from the meter on the property side of the meter.