How to Read Your Water Meter

Some of our customers like to occasionally read their own water meters, either to see how much water they have been using during a particular period or to double check their bill.

FINDING YOUR WATER METER

Your meter is located in a small, concrete box in the ground, usually near the street at the front of your property. In rural areas and some older areas, the meter may be in a different spot, but it is nearly always close to the edge of your property along a street where the main water line is located.

UNITS OF MEASURE

Your water meter measures cubic feet, not gallons. Each cubic foot equals 7.48 gallons. EMWD bills in 100 cubic foot increments - called “billing units” - which equals 748 gallons of water.

READING THE METER

Analog meters: The register on your water meter reads very much like the odometer on a car. On most of our meters, the last two digits on the right side are a different color from the rest of the numbers on the gauge. Meter readers do not read the last two numbers on these meters.

The next series of numbers to the left is the number of billing units that have passed through the meter.

In the analog example to the right, the meter shows that 235 billing units of water have passed through the meter. To determine the number of units of water that have been used, subtract the number shown in a previous reading from the current number. For example, if the previous reading had been 200, subtract that number from the current reading of 235, and you will know that 35 billing units of water have been used.

Digital meters: The registers have 9 digits on the face. This last five digits on the right side measure from 1/1000 cubic feet to 10 cubic feet. The next series of numbers to the left is the number of billing units that have passed through the meter. Those are the numbers used to calculate your usage.
DO YOU HAVE A LEAK?

Most leaks are from broken irrigation lines and running toilets. A broken irrigation main or lateral line 1" or smaller will waste between 1,200 to over 3,000 gallons per hour. A silent toilet leak can be as small as 30 gallons per day. However, larger leaks can be up to 5 gallons per minute (equivalent to 9 billing units per day)!

Here's an easy way to let your meter tell you whether you have any leaks that are costing you money and that you should have fixed.

Most meters have a sweep hand much like the second hand on a clock. Some meters also (or instead) have a small diamond or triangle set in the face of the meter. These are used as leak detectors because they turn if there is any movement of water through your meter. Digital meters have a “flow indicator” icon (usually a “+” or “-” symbol).

To check for a leak, turn off all water faucets and water-using appliances on your property, indoors and out. When you are done, look at your meter. If the sweep hand or the diamond/triangle is moving (or if there is a “+” symbol on a digital flow indicator), there is water passing through your meter. That means either you've forgotten to turn something off, or you have a leak on your side of the meter.

Please Note: EMWD does not repair leaks on your side of the meter. That is your responsibility. You may wish to call a plumber, because hidden leaks can be very expensive.