

How to Locate a Leak in Your Plumbing System

Some leaks at your home or business are easy to find because they are in plain sight or they can be easily heard. Many leaks can be silent or not easily seen. Below are some tips to help you locate the more hard to find leaks.

- **Using Your Meter:** Customers in the District have a water meter which is a great tool for determining if a leak is present. All of the meters in the District are equipped with a low flow indicator, also known as a leak detector. The low flow indicator is a triangle shaped dial on the face of the meter that will spin when water flows through the meter. Most of the triangles are red in color and towards the outer edge of the meter face, on others it is white and in the middle of the dial. A simple way to use this helpful tool is to make sure there is no water being used on the property, then check the low flow indicator. If the triangle is spinning, chances are there is a leak present.



The above picture illustrates a typical water meter in Carmichael (notice the red triangle).

- **Isolating the Leak:** If your meter indicates that you may have a leak, the next step is to find where the leak is. Depending on your system, sometimes you can narrow down the search by isolating portions of the system. If you have a house valve, which turns the water off to your house or building, you could turn it off and check the meter again. If the low flow indicator is still spinning, this would isolate the leak to the section between the meter and the house valve. If the spin has stopped, the leak would be past the house valve. You could also do the same test if there is a valve that turns off the irrigation to the property. If you can narrow your search down to one section of your system, the easier it will be to pin point the leak.

- **Toilet Leaks:** When searching for leaks inside your home or business, toilets are a good place to start. You cannot always hear a toilet leak; therefore, they often go undetected. An easy way to test your toilet for leaks is with a dye test. For this test you will need some dye tablets (which are available for free at the District office) or you can use some food coloring. Remove the lid on the toilet tank and drop the tablets or food coloring into the tank. This will change the color of the water in the tank. **Do not flush the toilet.** After 15 minutes check the bowl of the toilet. If any of the color has reached the bowl, there is a leak present. A majority of toilet leaks are caused by a faulty flapper valve. Replacing the flapper will usually stop the leak.



The above picture illustrates the first step in a leak test using dye tablets (you may also use food coloring). Remember not to flush the toilet during this step.



Water in the tank will start to change color.



If colored water appears in the bowl there may be a leak on the flapper valve.

- **Irrigation Leaks:** There are a few signs to look for while checking for irrigation leaks. Check for areas in the landscape that are greener or growing at a faster rate than areas around it. This could indicate a leak in that area that is supplying more water to one part of the landscape than the others. A clear indicator of a leak is standing water or damp areas in your landscape. Significant pressure or flow loss in the irrigation system could also indicate a leak. Many times these leaks are caused by a broken sprinkler head. It is a good practice to check your irrigation system for leaks monthly.



The above picture illustrates the signs of a typical irrigation leak.



The District is available to assist in troubleshooting irrigation issues. For more information contact our office at (916) 483-2452.