

Tips on locating leaks:

Pay attention to your water bill. If it spikes, there very well could be a leak.

Take a look around.

Look and listen for signs of leaks.

Check all of your faucets and hose bibs.

Look for soggy or soft spots in your lawn and garden.

Call your water utility, so someone can come out and check your meter to see if the leak detector on the meter is turning. This won't locate the leak, but it will indicate if something out of the ordinary is going on.

Detecting leaks is first line of defense against water waste

By FRANK WATT

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These days, living "green" is fashionable and in the news. Conserving water resources certainly fits into this scenario, and it also saves you money. One of the best ways to start doing this is by finding leaks in and around your home. You probably haven't thought that a small leak is that big of a deal, but it can make a huge difference in your water bill.

A 1/8-inch hole in a pipe with 40 pounds per square inch (psi) of pressure will lose 2,500 gallons in a day. A leak in that pipe the size of a pinhead can waste 360,000 gallons in a year. A leaky toilet may lose as much as 90,000 gallons in a month. And that's just inside your house. Outside, sprinkler system leaks dripping hose bibs may waste thousands of gallons each month.

If you're paying \$3 per 1,000 gallons of water, the previously mentioned leaky toilet tank is costing you \$270 per month. If your water utility charges even more for increased amounts of water, you'll pay substantially more than that. The point is that even if the repair of a leak involves hiring a plumber, then the cost is quickly repaid through savings in your water bill.

So how do you go about finding a leak? If you see spike in the amount of water you use on your monthly bill, that can be a pretty good indication. If you normally use more than 10,000 gallons per month, then perhaps you've got something less obvious going on that you're not aware of.

There are devices available on the Internet that will track the level in your toilet tank and signal if you have a leak. A low-tech way of doing this is to add food coloring or a dye tablet to the tank and check every 15 minutes for an hour to see if the color shows up in the toilet bowl without flushing. Put paper towels around your dishwasher and washing machine and see if they pick up any dampness. There are systems available that will automatically shut off the water to your house if they detect a leak. This seems a little extreme, unless you've got a vacation home that sits vacant for extended periods. But this does bring up the fact that it is very important to know where the main water shut-off is for your home. They're very often located in the crawlspace or basement.

We live in a semiarid climate where droughts will always be a part of our environment. Water for our future means conserving now. The Drought Response Information Project (DRIP) is a collaboration between the valley's domestic water utilities and CSU Cooperative Extension to provide information and educate the public about drought and the importance of water conservation.