



Tahoe City  
Public Utility District

## Water Meter

### Frequently Asked Questions

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#### **Q1. How do I know how much water I am using?**

Your monthly bill will show how much water you used for the previous month. Your bill also includes your monthly usage during the previous 12 months for comparison. You can read your water meter periodically and record the reading and date. For information on how to read your meter see **Q4** below.

#### **Q2. I would like to monitor my water meter, how can I do that?**

You can periodically read your meter, record the reading and date, and then subtract the previous reading to determine your usage over that period of time.

The District also offers the use of a remote reading device that we can lend to you at no cost for up to two weeks. (The District has a limited quantity of these devices, which are available on a first-come, first-served basis). The device is programmed to read your meter by radio and can be placed somewhere in your house or garage in a convenient location. You can retrieve your meter reads as often as you like without having to access your water box. The District will program, deliver and set up the device for you. We will collect a \$75 deposit at the time of set up. If you wish to keep the device, we will keep your deposit to purchase a replacement unit for our inventory.

#### **Q3. I need to find my water meter box, where is it located?**

Your meter box is typically located in the front of your property near one of the shared property lines with your neighbor. Homes in the Highlands subdivision may have their boxes located in the easement behind the home. The meter box will typically be a rectangular concrete box with a concrete/cast iron lid marked "water". In some areas the box may be identified by a round 18" diameter cast iron lid marked "water meter". The District maintains records of your water box location and can be contacted for further assistance if you cannot find your box.

#### **Q4. How do I read my water meter?**

Find your meter box, per **Q3**. Carefully remove the water box lid using a large screwdriver or other tool. Take great care not to damage the meter, transmitter or associated wires. Those with the 18" diameter round meter box must carefully remove the bracket holding the transmitters and then remove the large green foam plug to view the meters. These items must be properly replaced to avoid freeze damage or improper operation.

Once you have the box open, you will see the top of the meter. Lift the protective cover to expose the meter face. On the face of the meter you will see a large dial, a small red star wheel and a set of numbers similar to a car's odometer. The large dial typically reads gallons, the small star wheel is used to detect leaks and minor usage, and the odometer reads total gallons used. Read the odometer left to right, including the fixed zero on the far right. This is your total gallons used. Record the reading and then compare it to your latest bill, or re-read your meter within the next

day or two to determine your daily consumption. If you suspect you have a leak, you will notice constant or intermittent movement in the small red star wheel. Inspect all your fixtures, toilets, faucets, hose bibs and irrigation and isolate or repair as needed. If the star wheel continues to move, you may have a leak underground.

View our [How to Read Your Water Meter](#) informational materials online.

#### **Q5. How do I know if my meter is accurate?**

Today's meters are extremely accurate. Most meter inaccuracies are due to age and wear and yield a reading that is less than what was actually used. If you suspect your meter reading is too high, there are a few things to check. Take your last monthly bill and look at the current meter reading on the bill. Compare it to your meter read today. (See **Q4** and our [How to Read Your Water Meter](#) informational materials online for more information). If today's meter read is less than what your bill says, please contact us to investigate. If there are two meters in your meter box, run a hose bib at your house to observe which meter is yours. You can also check your meter accuracy by simply running water until your meter pointer is at zero. Insuring that nothing else is using water in the house, accurately fill a one or two gallon container and return to your meter to see if the pointer moved the appropriate amount. Each number on the clock face of the meter dial represents one gallon. If you accurately dispensed one gallon, the pointer should have increased by approximately one gallon.

#### **Q6. How can I estimate what my water bill will be?**

Your monthly bill will have a breakdown of your water consumption and base rate charges. You can visit the District's water rate calculator on our website at <http://www.tcpud.org/utilities/water.shtml> , then select the "[Rate Calculator](#)" hyperlink.

For tips on understanding your water bill, view this information on our website:

<http://www.tcpud.org/images/general/understanding.jpg> .

The District's rates are located online, at:

<http://www.tcpud.org/download/general/2015waterrates.pdf> .

#### **Q7. How can I tell how much water my irrigation system is using?**

If you are familiar with how to read your water meter (see **Q4** or [How to Read Your Water Meter](#)), then try this technique:

Open the lid and make your meter register visible. Activate one of your irrigation zones, and return to the meter. Wait a couple of minutes to insure your sprinklers are free from air and steady. Use a stopwatch to time how many gallons are being used in one minute. You can do this by starting your stopwatch when the large pointer on the meter dial passes 0. When your timer reaches one minute, immediately check the position of the pointer. If the pointer started at 0 and ended up at 6, then that irrigation zone is using 6 gallons per minute. If the pointer passed 0 again before one minute was up, it would be 10 gallons, plus the number the pointer was at when one minute is up. Once you establish how many gallons per minute that zone is using, check to see how many minutes that zone is running, multiply the number of minutes and the number of gallons per minute observed above. This will give you the total gallons used for that particular zone per cycle. Repeat for all of the remaining zones to determine how much water one full irrigation cycle uses. Multiply this by the number of days per month your irrigation is running to determine how much water will be used by irrigation each month. Refer to **Q6** to see what the cost for this water will be.

**Q8. My bill says I have a potential leak, what do I do?**

First, check your water meter for any indications of a leak. See **Q4** and **Q9** for more information.

If you determine your leak is inside your home, check all of your toilets, faucets, showers and under your home for any leaks. If you determine the leak is outdoors, check your irrigation, and remote hose bibs. If you do not find anything, you may have a leak underground. Contact a local licensed plumber to investigate.

View our [Leak Repair Checklist](#) informational materials online.

**Q9. How do I check for water leaks?**

Even if you don't see any obvious leaks around the house, it is helpful to occasionally check for leaks using your meter. The best time to do this is when your household has few people around and you can leave or not use any water for about an hour or more. First, locate your meter box, open it up and view your meter register. Walk through your house and outside areas and make sure nothing is leaking, or using any water, and turn off all hose bibs, etc. If you are confident there is no water use, return to your meter and check the reading. Record the meter odometer reading and record the location of the big red pointer. Make sure until you return to read the meter that nobody uses any water indoors or out. Return to your meter after at least an hour and perform the same readings as above. If the pointer did not move and the numbers on the odometer are the same, you do not have a leak. If the pointer or odometer has advanced, you may have a leak. The next step is to isolate where the leak might be. If you have a shutoff valve under your house, shut off the valve and perform the same test as above. If the meter continues to advance, your leak is most likely somewhere between the meter box and your shutoff valve. If the meter stops advancing, the leak is most likely somewhere in your house.

View our [How to Check for a Water Leak](#) and our [Leak Repair Checklist](#) informational materials online.

**Q10. I hear water running in my pipes, what do I do?**

You may have a potential leak somewhere on your property. Perform the steps in **Q8** and **Q9**.

View our [How to Check for a Water Leak](#) and our [Leak Repair Checklist](#) informational materials online.

**For more information:**

- Visit our website, at <http://www.tcpud.org/>
- View the District's Water Ordinance at <http://www.tahoecitypud.com/download/general/cwo263.pdf>
- For any other questions, call the **Utilities Department** at (530) 580-6278 or email Carol Hackbarth at [chackbarth@tcpud.org](mailto:chackbarth@tcpud.org)
- Main Office Phone: (530) 583-3796  
Fax: (530) 583-1475
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