How to Use Your Meter as a Detective

For Excessively High Water Bills and Possible Leak Detection

- **If you find yourself with a high water bill, use these simple steps to help identify the cause**

- First, compare previous water bills and check the amount of water consumption each month. Typically water usage is lower in the winter months and higher in the summer months.
- If the consumption is very high, compare the current read on your bill with the read on the meter register.
- At the time you read your meter, be sure no water is being used in or around your home. If no water is being used, then the meter should not be registering any water flowing through it.
- If the meter indicates water flow, you may have a leak. But first, re-check sprinklers in front and back yards, hoses and faucets, and check all plumbing fixtures inside the house to be sure nothing is on.
- If the meter is running fast, you may have a major leak.
- If the leak detector (small triangle, which is red, blue, or black in color) is turning slowly, you may have a small leak.
- The leak detector (small triangle) will turn very slowly, even for a dripping faucet.
- If the leak detector turns intermittently (on and off) then, chances are, water is being used at a fixture with a float; such as a toilet or a swamp cooler. Because the swamp cooler basin has to be continually filled, the float operates a valve to let more water in as needed. The toilet flapper, if not seated properly, will allow seepage out of the tank into the bowl. The float will slowly drop down as the water level drops, opening the valve and letting water in to top off the tank.

To isolate leaks, using your meter is very simple

- First, shut off your irrigation supply valve. Re-check your meter. If the indicator is still moving, then the leak is not in the irrigation system. If the leak detector stops moving, then check the control valves for cracks or bad diaphragms which allow water to seep through much like the flapper in the toilet tank.
- Second, if the leak detector is still turning shut off the supply valve to the house. This valve is located in the garage wall, in a plastic box at the front of the house, or on a pipe riser coming out of the ground with a faucet, and entering the house through the wall. If the leak detector continues to turn, chances are you have a leak in your main service line between the meter and the house. If the leak detector stops, then the problem is in the house.
- Third, open the house supply valve, and one-by-one start shutting off individual toilets, sinks, and other devices. You must check the meter each time a valve is shut off, until the meter stops moving. Note: It is possible to have more than one leak at a time!

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