



## High Utility Bill Investigation Checklist

City of Calera utility customers may occasionally receive bills that are higher than normal. Having an unusually high bill may indicate that there is a plumbing issue in your home or business or that there is a problem with your meter reading. Sometimes a high bill may simply reflect an increase in water usage as the result of watering the lawn or garden, filling a swimming pool, or having guests in the house.

This checklist is used to investigate a concern about a high bill. You can use the questions on this checklist to determine if there may be a legitimate reason for a higher than usual bill, or if there are reasons to suspect a metering, billing, or plumbing issue. If, after using the checklist, you believe there may be a problem with your water meter, please contact the City of Calera Water Department at (205) 668-3500 option 4.

If you feel you have a plumbing problem or a water leak that is causing the higher bill, you may want to contact a plumber of your choice to investigate and make any needed repairs.

### Account Information: Please have this information available if you call the Water Department

Name/Company Name	
Service Address	
Account Number	

To begin investigating why your bill may be high, please read your water meter and compare the current reading with the latest reading shown on your most recent utility bill from City of Calera Water Department. If the current reading is **lower** than the last reading on your bill, please call (205) 668-3500 option 4 and ask for the Billing Clerk.

If the reading on the meter is **higher** than the reading shown on your most recent bill this is to be expected. Please continue with the checklist below.

### Checklist:

Yes	No	
		Make sure all water faucets and water using appliances in your house or business are shut off. Now look at the water meter. Is it spinning or showing a water droplet? If so, this indicates water is going through the meter. If everything is turned off, then there is most likely a leak causing the higher water bill.
		Are any of your faucets or spigots dripping?
		Does our water service feed any external buildings or water using systems (such as an irrigation system)?



	Have you had any pipes replaced?
	Have you had any toilets repaired/replaced recently? Have you conducted any dye tests on your toilets? (Instructions below.)
	Do you have a dishwasher? Has it been repaired/replaced recently? Has it been checked for leaks?
	Do you have an ice machine? Has it been repaired/replaced recently? Has it been checked for leaks?
	Do you have a washing machine? Has it been repaired/replaced recently? Has it been checked for leaks?
	Do you have a water softener? Has it been repaired/replaced recently? Has it been checked for leaks? Have you checked the cycle time for it? If water continues to go down the drain after it has regenerated, it is leaking and needs to be fixed. You can also turn the water softener off for a month and see if it makes a difference on your water bill.
	Do you have a humidifier on your furnace? Inspect the float in the humidifier to make sure it is not filling higher than the recommended manufacturer level.
	Do you have a water heater? Do you have boiler heat? Do you have a water-cooled air conditioner? Malfunctioning units may contribute to higher bills.
	Do you have a pool or hot tub? Has the pool/hot tub been filled recently? Has water been added to the pool/hot tub recently?
	Do you have a sump pump? Is it electric with a water back up system? Does the water back up system run off city water?
	Did you have guests or extra people in your home? Did you have additional employees in your business during your last billing cycle?

For questions on the checklist where you have answered yes, you may want to investigate further. Actual usage can cause your water bill to be higher than usual. Leaks may also cause the bill to be higher than usual. If you also have city sewer, then your bill could be even higher because water that goes into the sewer is processed at a higher rate than regular water. Per the City of Calera Water Board, water lost due to a leak is considered to be used by you because it has gone through your water meter and therefore you will be charged for such.



## Dye Testing Your Toilet for Leaks

Toilet leaks are a very common cause of high water bills. Many times you can't hear the toilet running or leaking. Here's a simple way to check for a toilet leak:

1. Take the top off the toilet tank. Remove any cleaning agents that may cause the water in the toilet bowl to be colored.
2. Drop a few drops of household food coloring into the tank to dye the water. You can also use a colored drink mix or instant coffee.
3. Wait about 10 minutes. Do **not** flush the toilet or let anyone use it during this time.
4. Check the color of the water in the toilet bowl. If the color of the dye from the tank appears in the bowl, you have a leak/running toilet.

## Water Meter Responsibilities

The utility customer is responsible for protecting the utility meter from any damages once the meter has been set. Please take precautions to protect the meter from any damage. (Examples: Meter Freezing, Parking on Meter, Damage during Lawn Care Maintenance, etc.)

If you discover your utility meter has been damaged, please contact the utility department to schedule an inspection of the utility meter. You may reach the Water Department at 205-668-3511 during the hours of 6:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Once the utility meter has been inspected any repairs made will be billed to the customer. Charges will be based on materials and labor for the needed repairs.



Older Meter

New Meter

Cumulative water consumption

Leak Indicator



Leak indicator will be spinning even when home water fixtures are not in use. This indicates possible leak

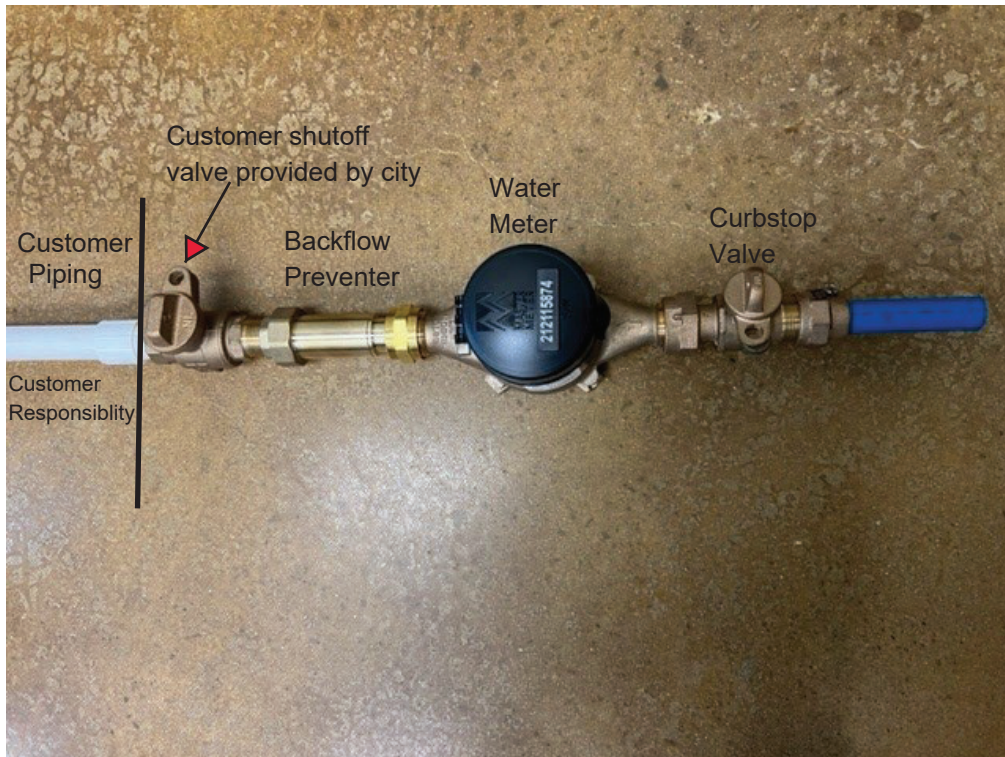
Water Flow rate

Leak Indicator. (will have water droplet symbol if leaking)

Cumulative water consumption



Leak indicator generates alarm when there is NOT 3 consecutive hrs of zero consumption in 24 hr period





## **Disconnected Account Information**

Disconnects are processed Monday at 5:00 p.m. before the second Tuesday of each month. Any payments received after 5:00 p.m. will NOT prevent your service from being disconnected. An administrative fee of \$50.00 will be charged to any delinquent account at that time. Accounts with a previous balance will be disconnected the second Tuesday of the month beginning at 6:30 a.m.

Account must be paid in full by cash or credit card by 12 noon for same day re-connection if disconnected for non-payment or return item. **Please note re-connection process may take up to 8 working hours for completion.**