

Be Water Wise: Tips on Understanding Your Water Bill

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The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) wants you to be water wise by providing you with the following information on understanding how water rates are set and the importance of monitoring your water meter. By becoming water wise, you can make every drop count – and begin counting your monthly savings on your water bill!

Who sets my water rates?

The CPUC regulates the state's investor- and privately owned water utilities. Of these, large water companies are required to file a General Rate Case every three years with the CPUC. Rates are set by the CPUC to cover a company's costs (purchasing and providing water, treatment costs, purchasing electric power, etc.) and to allow a company to earn a reasonable rate of return on its investment in the water system.

How are my water rates determined?

Water rates are based on the true costs of treating and delivering water to customers. Rates and billing frequency vary according to geographic region. While you may be billed based on a regular water meter reading, someone else may be billed on a flat-rate billing. Please visit your water service provider's website for rates, schedules, and tariff information in your area. Some offer a water rate estimator for you to calculate your water consumption based on your area, meter size, and monthly water usage.

Where is my water meter located, and why should I learn how to read it?

Many water meters are located in a concrete box near your front curb. Knowing how to read your water meter can help you determine how much water your household has used and to detect any leaks. Leaks and irrigation issues are the two most common causes for higher-than-normal monthly water bills. If your water bill continues to rise and you have not increased your usage, you may have a water leak.

How do I read my water meter?

Reading your water meter is similar to reading your automobile's odometer; however, instead of measuring the number of miles, it measures cubic feet of water. Residents are billed for every 100 cubic feet of water used (100 cubic feet = 748 gallons). Read digits left to right (discard the last two numbers with the black background as they measure in units less than 100 cubic feet). This represents water being used (one revolution of the hand = 7.48 gallons of water). The hand on the meter turns as you use water. If you turn off all of your household water and the hand continues to move, you may have a leak, such as a leaky toilet or faucet.

For more information contact the CPUC's Business & Community Outreach team!

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