

Ramifications of a Water Leak

When you have a significant water leak, the ramifications can be more expensive than you think. Consider for a moment how the Indian Wells Valley Water District computes your bill.

First of all, your statement reflects a “ready to serve” charge. As this charge represents fixed costs that are carefully calculated and analyzed every three years or so, it is unchanging from month to month.

Depending on the location of your home or business, you may also see a zone charge, which is calibrated according to your elevation and consumption. Which makes sense ... it requires more electricity and infrastructure to deliver water uphill.

And finally, you will see your usage calculated for the previous 30 or so days along with a charge specifically computed from that usage. The Water District has adopted what is referred to as an “inverted block rate,” strongly recommended as one means of promoting conservation because the more water you use, the higher the rate you pay. Here’s how it works:

For a ¾ inch residential meter (the most common) our lowest price tier consists of the first 8 hundred cubic feet (hcf) of water used, which is billed at \$.64 per hcf (plus ready to serve and zone charges, if any). Note: Since there are 748 gallons in an hcf, a household receives 5,984 gallons a month at this price, almost 200 gallons per day.

There are a total of seven pricing tiers, each one higher than the last, meaning the cost per hcf increases with consumption.

Our highest rate tier runs at \$1.73 per hcf, approximately 270% more than Tier 1.

For a ¾ inch meter this rate applies to usage in excess of 45 hcf or 33,660 gallons in any month.

As you can see, high water consumption in any form is not wallet friendly. But how can this information assist you?

One of the most comprehensive studies conducted so far on per household water use was completed in the late 1990s by the Boulder Area Sustainability Information Network (BASIN). The data was gathered by the University of Colorado and staff members of Aquacraft, Inc. in 12 participating cities.

BASIN tracked indoor and outdoor water consumption separately in 1,000 homes per city for one year. The profiles of the study houses were diverse and included everything from mansions to one bedroom cabins with a similar variety of landscaping choices from emerald green grass all the way to weed patches. Average household size wound up at 2.8 people.

To cite an example, BASIN discovered that the average INDOOR use in Phoenix over a 12-month span amounted to 71,200 gallons. This equaled 5,933 gallons per month or 7.9 hcf – which at \$.64 per hcf, would cost IWWWD customers \$5.12 not including zone and ready to serve charges. Considering how vital water is to the quality of our lives, we believe this to be a remarkable value.

Our mission statement involves providing the highest quality water at the lowest possible cost. Our Board of Directors and staff are committed to this concept for the benefit of the foreseeable future and generations to come. We have also embraced the idea of rewarding our constituents who conserve because conserved water is the cheapest water. If you would like to become more water efficient, you should know that we offer a number of free water saving devices along with publications that tackle everything from simplified plumbing to landscaping tips. We can even teach you how to conduct a water audit to pinpoint leaks.

In short, we are here to be of assistance in any way we can. Don't hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns regarding your bill or service.