Checking for a Leak Beyond the Water Meter

If no leak is detected in the meter box, your next step is to look at the water meter register. You may have to wipe the register face off with a wet towel to see the entire meter face. Do not tamper with the electronic meter reading device. Dirt usually settles on the meter from month to month due to rain, irrigation and other moisture getting into the meter box.

Here's where it gets a little complicated, but you can do it. Some of the numbers on your meter are part of the odometer and they move. One or two numbers to the right of the odometer are painted-on (fixed) zeroes and they tell you the units the water usage is being measured in.

One fixed zero tells you that the red dial is registering one gallon as it moves from one number to the next. The lines between numbers indicate a tenth of a gallon.

Two fixed zeros tell you that the red dial is registering ten gallons between each number. The lines between numbers indicate one gallon.

To detect a leak, turn off all water in the house and watch the red dial for movement. (Remember: If you have an icemaker or some other device that automatically turns water on, it will be detected at the water meter.)

Example: If the red dial moves two tenths of a gallon in one minute you are using one gallon of water every five minutes or 12 gallons of water per hour. If all water in the house is turned off, there should be no flow of water through the meter. If the red dial is continually moving forward, and all water is turned off in the house, you may be losing water by several methods.

Dripping Faucets are easily recognized. You will have a faucet that does not completely turn off, and you may hear an annoying "drip, drip, drip".

Leaking toilets are more difficult to detect. Water loss may be caused by leaking parts or an incorrect setting. You may not always hear the problem.

If the flapper valve in the toilet tank is not seating well, water will flow from the tank to the bowl and eventually down the drain as the bowl fills to a certain level. This problem can be detected by putting some food coloring into the tank. Wait a while and see if the water in the bowl has begun to change color. If so, the flapper valve is the problem. Check more than once. The flapper valve may seat properly some of the time, but not all of the time. This can make this type of water loss difficult to detect.

Another way that water loss can occur in a toilet is through the overflow in the tank. The overflow is the open pipe, usually located in the middle of the tank. If the float allows water to rise too high, water will go into the overflow pipe and down the drain. The best way to detect this is to take the top off the tank

and see if water is at the top of the overflow pipe. If it is, the float may need to be adjusted.

Landscape irrigation problems can also result in water loss. These problems normally occur when sprinklers are on. There may be a break in the line or a malfunction in one of the sprinkler heads. Check to see if some parts of your lawn remain wet even when the sprinklers have not been on.

Remember: These are just suggested places to look for water loss first and is not intended to be all-inclusive.