

The Villages®

Community Development Districts



WATER LEAKS & WATER CONSERVATION

The District owns and operates numerous Utilities which serve the residents of The Villages:

- **Village Center Service Area** (Lake County and District 1 in Sumter County) is owned by Village Center Community Development District.
- **Little Sumter Service Area** (Districts 2, 3 in Sumter County and District 4 in Marion County) is owned by Village Center Community Development District. (EXCLUDES Dist. 4 Ph. IV Phillips Villas (M232) / Soulliere Villas (M233) / Chatham Acres (M839)).
- **North Sumter Utility** (Districts 5, 6, 7, 8 and a small section of District 9 in Sumter County) is owned by North Sumter County Utility Dependent District.
- **Central Sumter Utility** Serving a majority of District 9, all of District 10 in Sumter County and District 11 in Lake County is owned by North Sumter County Utility Dependent District.
- **South Sumter Utility** (Districts 12, 13 and a portion of District 14) is owned by the Wildwood Utility Dependent District.

The Village Center Community Development District (VCCDD) Utilities Department is responsible for the operations and management of the water and wastewater treatment systems. The VCCDD Finance Department is responsible for the billing and collection of payment for those services. The average household's leaks can account for nearly 10,000 gallons of water wasted every year and ten percent of homes have leaks that waste 90 gallons or more per day according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

This Fact Sheet is provided to assign residents with understanding the reason for a perceived high bill, or unexplained high-water usage, water conservation and leak detection:

- All of the water meters that the District installs are warranted for accuracy by the American Water Works Association (AWWA) and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).
- While the District may be able to assist a customer in determining how much water is being used, **it is ultimately the customer's responsibility to find the source of perceived high-water usage on their premises.**
- **The District is not responsible for demonstrating to a customer where or how they are using water on their premises.** The District offers once-per-year testing of your water meter at no charge. 3rd Party independent testing is also available, at charge.

Possible reasons for what you may consider to be a high bill include the following:

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- **Irrigation.** This is the most common reason for high water consumption. Regular watering of your lawn or garden uses a substantial amount of water. Abnormally hot and dry weather or additional watering of new or altered landscaping on your property can result in even higher water consumption. Irrigation systems vary widely in water efficiencies. One system can use vastly more water than another system. An irrigation system that has a leak 1/32nd of an inch in diameter (about the thickness of a dime) can waste about 6,300 gallons of water per month.
- **A change in your water use pattern.** Frequent visitors, new appliances, filling your home pool, power washing, and other home construction projects can substantially affect your bill.
- **More accurate readings due to a new meter.** When we replace older meters with newer meters, you may have higher water and sewer charges as a result of having more accurate readings. Meters tend to “slow down” over time.
- **A leak on your side of the water meter.** Many households have some kind of plumbing leak, which can waste a surprising amount of water. The average leaky toilet can waste about 200 gallons of water per day. That’s over 6,000 gallons of water a month and may potentially increase your bill by hundreds and even thousands of dollars. Toilets, water heaters, water softeners, in-line humidifiers and irrigation systems are common sources of leaks.

What is considered a water leak?

A water leak is defined as an unintentional water loss caused by broken or damaged plumbing fixtures, pipes or irrigation equipment at a customer’s residence or non-residential site that results in a customer’s bill being higher than the customer’s typical bill for water services.

Who is responsible for finding the source of a leak?

It is ultimately the customer’s responsibility to find the source of the leak on their premises. The District is not responsible for demonstrating to a customer where or how they are using water on their premises. The District is responsible for all piping systems up to the meter connection. The customer is responsible for everything past the meter connection.

A simple test is to turn of ALL water in your home including pool auto-fillers, irrigation, appliances, etc. If you then look at your meter after turning off all water and still see flow being recorded, this is indicative of a leak within your system. This will not detect a leak within the irrigation system. You should contact a specialist to determine if and where a leak is within the system.

Can a resident of The Villages request a Leak Credit Adjustment?

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Yes, Once the leak has been fixed, visit <https://www.districtgov.org/departments/Utilities/utilities.aspx> for the appropriate form and procedures. The form must be received within 60 days of the due date of the last bill impacted by the leak.

Can a resident of The Villages request an Unexplained High Use Credit Adjustment?

Yes, visit <https://www.districtgov.org/departments/Utilities/utilities.aspx> for the appropriate form and procedures.

What if I don't have a leak but I still think my bill is too high?

The District uses a state-of-the-art water metering system, and its water meters are certified devices. Upon request, we will:

- Review the account using our state-of-the-art metering system.
- Perform a physical inspection and test of the meter.
- Confirm accuracy of reading to resident.
- Offer 3rd Party Independent Meter Testing if so desired by the resident.

Do I need to pay my bill if I am submitting for a Leak or Unexplained High Use Credit?

Residents are responsible for payment of the entire amount due on their utility bills within the normal payment period. If this does not occur, the customer is subject to all current and applicable collection activities and termination of service processes for delinquent accounts.

The Facts on Leaks:

- Sewer charges are directly related to water use. The District charges are based on the amount of water that passes through your water meter, whether you consumed the water, or it leaked and was wasted.
- Water-wasting leaks include running toilets, dripping faucets, and other leaking pipes around your home. Most of these leaks are easy to fix with parts from your local hardware store or call a professional plumber for help.
- Fixing these leaks can save your family more than 10 percent on water bills. That's like saving \$1 for every \$10 spent on water.
- The average household's leaks can account for more than 10,000 gallons of water wasted every year, or the amount of water needed to wash 270 loads of laundry.

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- Household leaks can waste more than 1 trillion gallons annually nationwide. That's equal to the annual household water use of more than 11 million homes.
- Ten percent of homes have leaks that waste 90 gallons or more per day.
- Common types of leaks found in the home include worn toilet flappers, dripping faucets, and leaking showerheads. All are easily correctable. Keep your home leak-free by repairing dripping faucets, toilet flappers and showerheads. In most cases, fixture replacement parts don't require a major investment.
- Fixing easily corrected household water leaks can save homeowners about 10 percent on their water bills.
- Most common leaks can be eliminated after retrofitting a household with new WaterSense labeled fixtures and other high-efficiency appliances.
- Underground leaks can be very large and go on for a long time before being noticed. Watch for soggy patches of ground, an isolated area of green lawn, or water pooling on the ground outside. If the leak is under pavement, concrete driveway or a building, a high bill or spinning water meter may be the only signs.

Finding Leaks:

- You are charged for all water that passes through the water meter and into your home, whether you enjoyed a cold drink or a hot shower or the water dripped, leaked and was wasted.
- Turn off all faucets and showers and make sure no one flushes the toilet while you do this meter check. Open the cover on the meter and look at the wheel on the meter face. If it is moving slowly or spinning fast, you probably have water leaks.
- Walk through your house listening for running toilets and looking for drips. Drips usually mean leaks.
- Find out if your toilet is leaking silently by placing a drop of food coloring in the toilet tank (that's the area behind the toilet seat—ask for mom or dad's help to remove the lid). If color shows up in the toilet bowl after 15 minutes without flushing, you have a leak.

Faucets:

- Take a watch or clock with a second hand and time how often your faucet drips. A leaky faucet that drips at the rate of one drip per second can waste more than 3,000 gallons in a year.
- There are parts that hold your faucet together called washers and gaskets—they can wear down and cause drips. These parts are inexpensive and easy to replace. Find them at your local

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hardware store.

- There's also a little screen device called an "aerator" that can be screwed onto the tip of your faucet—it adds air into the water stream so you can use less water to wash your hands or brush your teeth without noticing a difference in water flow. Look for the WaterSense label when buying an aerator or replacing a faucet—that means the product will work well and save water.

Showers:

- Showerheads—the place where water comes out in streams at the top of your shower—can also get old and leak, even when the water is not on. A showerhead that drops just 10 drips in a minute wastes more than 500 gallons per year. That's enough water, if you saved it all up, to wash 60 loads of dishes in your dishwasher.
- Most leaky showerheads can be fixed by making sure they're screwed in tight. Wrap the showerhead connection in "pipe tape," available at hardware stores, and use a wrench to tighten it.

Toilets:

- If you can hear the water in your toilet making noise, even when no one flushed recently, you have a running toilet that could be wasting 200 gallons of water or more every day. Sometimes you just need to jiggle the handle to fix it, but sometimes a part needs to be replaced.
- Many toilets leaks are caused because the "flapper" is decayed or broken. The flapper is a rubber piece that opens up to let the water flow from the tank into the bowl when you pull down on the toilet handle. You can easily fix this leak with parts from your local hardware store. Ask at the store for help choosing the correct parts. If your toilet continues to leak, call a professional plumber.
- If you have to replace a leaky toilet, look for a new one with the WaterSense label to save both water and money on your water and sewer bills.

Outdoors:

- Check your garden hose for leaks where it connects to the side of the house. If it leaks when the hose is turned on, make sure the hose is screwed in tight. If that doesn't work, replace the nylon or rubber hose washer or wrap the "spigot," which is the metal faucet where the end of the host attaches to the wall, in pipe tape.
- If you have an inground irrigation or sprinkler system that waters your lawn, check the system each spring before turning it on to make sure the sprinkler heads were not broken or have sprung any leaks.

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Irrigation:

- After checking the system for obvious leaks, use the water meter to identify underground leaks and breaks in the pipe. Leaks can occur on the mainline pipe that feeds each of the sprinkler zones. Not all leaks will come above ground. Leaks may result in wet, muddy areas that never dry up. Grass that is greener than the rest may indicate a leak. Underground leaks are difficult to identify and may require the assistance of a sprinkler professional or leak detection service.
- Choose a day and time when the sprinkler system is turned off. Look for water running or leaking around the yard. Wet, boggy or muddy areas that cannot be explained by normal watering or rainfall are signs of a leak. Turn all water off inside the house. Turn off the sprinkler controller then check the meter for movement or record the dial numbers and wait 10 to 60 minutes then record the numbers again to see if they've changed. Turn on each sprinkler zone in turn and walk around to see if water is coming out of the ground or leaking around sprinkler heads or valves. This will identify leaks that are not related to the mainline sprinkler pipe.
- Install a rain sensor that will pause your sprinkler system when it rains.
- Realign or move the sprinkler heads. For a narrow planting bed or plants that are spaced far apart, consider switching to drip or soaker hoses.
- Runoff occurs because the sprinkler system sprays water faster than the soil can take in. It is prevalent on sloped landscapes. Allow the water to soak in by splitting watering times into two or more "cycles" with 30 minutes in between. This technique is called "Cycle and Soak".
- Most trees and many shrubs do not need additional watering when they are well-rooted after 3 to 4 years. When sprinklers are no longer needed replace the nozzle with a cap.
- Brown spots are a sign that the sprinkler spray is not reaching the area sufficiently. Adjust or replace all sprinkler head nozzles in the zone to provide even watering. Do not increase the watering time before making these adjustments.
- Misting sprinkler nozzles with tiny spray droplets in the air means the pressure is too high. If all the zones are misting, install a pressure regulating valve. If only one zone is misting have an irrigation professional install a pressure-regulating valve or install sprinkler heads that regulate the pressure.
- Replace or clean leaking, cracked, or clogged sprinkler heads. Adjust sprinkler heads spraying the wrong direction. Replace sprinkler heads that seep water after watering is finished. Sprinkler heads at the lowest elevation may drain water in the pipe. Have a professional install sprinkler heads with "check valves" to stop the water from leaking out and install check valves into the pipes at the bottom of a hill.
- Inspect sprinkler heads to ensure they pop up correctly and avoid spraying the driveway, sidewalk, house or street. Remove plant material that's grown over sprinkler heads.

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- Align sprinkler heads so that their spray reaches adjacent sprinkler heads. There are different kinds of sprinkler heads:
 - Spray heads are small with a fan of water that blankets the ground. Simply rotate the head until it is watering the area correctly.
 - Rotors are larger sprinkler heads that spray a single stream of water. Rotor heads need to be adjusted at the head itself, typically with a special tool.
 - Multi-stream nozzles can be retrofitted onto most spray heads and improve sprinkler efficiency by improving the spray coverage and spraying water more slowly. Sprinkler heads with multi-stream nozzles can be adjusted to change the length of throw of water.
- Straighten crooked sprinkler heads and move sprinklers that are too close to plants.
- Remove any dirt covering sprinkler valves.

Water Conservation:

General

- Never pour water down the drain when there may be another use for it. Use it to water your indoor plants or garden.
- Make sure your home is leak-free. Take a reading of the water meter. Wait 30 minutes without using any water and then take a second reading. If the meter reading changes, you have a leak.
- Repair dripping faucets by replacing washers. One drop per second wastes 2,700 gallons of water per year.

Bathroom

- Check for toilet leaks by adding food coloring to the tank. If you have a leak, the color will appear in the bowl within 30 minutes. Leaky toilets usually can be fixed inexpensively by replacing the flapper.
- Take shorter showers. Turn the water on to get wet; turn off to lather up; then turn the water back on to rinse.
- Replace your showerhead with an ultra-low-flow version.
- Don't let the water run while brushing your teeth, washing your face or shaving.

Kitchen

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- Operate dishwashers only when they are full. Use the "light wash" feature. Most dishwashers can clean soiled dishes very well, so you don't have to rinse before washing.
- When hand washing dishes, save water by filling two containers - one with soapy water and the other with rinse water containing a small amount of chlorine bleach.
- Don't use running water to thaw meat or other frozen foods. Defrost food overnight in the refrigerator or use the defrost setting on your microwave.
- Don't waste water waiting for it to get hot or cold. Capture it for other uses such as plant watering.
- Kitchen sink disposals require lots of water. Start a compost pile as an alternate way to dispose of food waste.

Laundry

- Operate clothes washers only when they are full or set the water level for the size of your load.
- When purchasing a new appliance, choose one that is more energy and water efficient.

Outdoor Water Conservation Tips

Car Washing

- Use a shut-off nozzle on your hose, so that water flows only as needed. When finished, turn it off at the faucet to avoid leaks.
- Consider using a commercial car wash that recycles water. If you wash your own car, park on the grass so that you will be watering it at the same time.

Lawn Care

- Don't overwater your lawn. Lawns only need to be watered every five to seven days in the summer, and every 10 to 14 days in the winter. A heavy rain eliminates the need for watering for up to two weeks.
- Water in several short sessions rather than one long one in order for your lawn to better absorb moisture.

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- Position sprinklers so water lands on the lawn and shrubs and not on paved areas.
- Check sprinkler systems and timing devices regularly to be sure they operate properly. Set a timer to remind yourself to turn manual sprinklers off. A garden hose can pour out 600 gallons in only a few hours.
- Raise the lawn mower blade to at least three inches, or to its highest level. A higher cut encourages grass roots to grow deeper, shades the root system, and holds soil moisture.

Pools

- Pools will evaporate in Florida, even in the Winter. Drought conditions can make refilling a pool very expensive. A pool may lose 125 gallons per day or more due to evaporation (more than 3,000 gallons per month), or up to ½” per day. Loss of 1” or more per day of water is indicative of a leak versus normal evaporation. Lack of rainwater to help restore water to a pool will exacerbate the loss due to evaporation. Water features and splash-out will add to loss of water. Windy conditions will also greatly increase pool evaporation.
- Pool auto-fillers maintain your pool level year-round by adding water automatically as needed. These can add hundreds of gallons per day to your pool based on use, conditions, leaks, and evaporation. Most auto-pool fillers operate off a spigot and are connected through flexible hose, or buried piping where you can’t easily detect a leak. Since these lines are under constant pressure 24/7, check the hose and the connection for leaks, as they can lose hundreds of gallons per day or more through leaks and drips.
- Leaks can occur in several places in a pool auto-fill, and cause loss of large amounts of water. If not winterized properly, the cylinder or bucket can crack. If an autofill valve begins to malfunction, it can leak out through the overflow line or around the lid. Too much rain can also cause a cylinder to overflow, mimicking a leak. The leaks of larger concern and consequence are those around the incoming water supply line and the outgoing pool equalizer line. Movement in the ground (or pool) can crack pipes or fittings, leading to underground leaks. Not winterizing an auto-fill could also cause cracks in the water supply line, and possibly also to the equalizer line.
- If you have a swimming pool, consider installing a new water-saving pool filter. A single backflushing with a traditional filter uses 180 to 250 gallons of water.
- Pools can leak at the filter, pump and all connections including those underground where you can’t see them. Also, check your solar panels for leaks regularly.
- Solar panels are roof can also leak. Although they should be obvious, you should still routinely inspect your panels and piping for any obvious leaks.

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- Cover pools and spas when not in use to reduce evaporation of water.

Outdoor Conservation

- Plant native and/or drought-tolerant grasses, ground covers, shrubs and trees. They don't need water as frequently and usually will survive a dry period without watering.
- Install water efficient irrigation devices, such as micro and drip irrigation and soaker hoses.
- Use mulch to retain moisture in the soil. Mulch also helps control weeds that compete with landscape plants for water.