

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - WATER & WASTEWATER

I received a card in my mailbox to return my meter reading. Why is it important that I provide an actual water meter reading?

Water meter readings ensure that water bills are based on actual consumption. When readings are not provided water consumption is estimated and you may be under or over billed. Consistent, actual readings can help identify plumbing leaks sooner and save you money. Additional charges may be applied if the City has to use means beyond the normal notice to obtain a meter reading. Returning the reading can be as easy as mailing the postage-paid card or sending an email to water@stcatharines.ca or a phone call to 905-688-5600 during regular hours or to 905-688-5601 ext. 1430 or 1433 after hours.

When does the City bill me for Water/Wastewater?

Go to the webpage named [Meter Reading & Billing Frequency](#)

My water/wastewater bill has always been consistent. Now it is suddenly very high. Is it the meter? Why has this happened?

A sudden rise in your water bill may be due to a number of reasons including:

- Plumbing leaks in toilets or taps
- Consecutive estimated readings followed by an accurate reading. If your water usage was under-estimated and your consumption for previous billing periods was higher, you may see an increase in your current “catch-up” bill.
- An increase in the number of people living in the house may result in higher consumption
- A dry hot summer, usually results in higher consumption outdoors
- An increase in the number of days in the billing period depending on when the readings were taken
- A residential water meter cannot suddenly run fast or over-register. Water flows through the piston and transmits through a gearing system to the register, which records the flow in units. The reading is dependent on the number of operations of the piston. New meters are calibrated in the factory and guaranteed for accuracy. Under-registering is usually what occurs as a meter ages. A sudden drop in readings could mean the water meter has stopped. It is imperative to call us immediately to get it exchanged. This will avoid over-estimating your consumption for the period the meter wasn't working.

How much water can pass through my meter?

The amount of water which can pass through a residential 5/8" water meter is 16 gallons per minute or 4.36 cubic metres (cm) per hour, equals approximately \$14.82 per hour. 220 gallons = 1 cm, 1000 litres = 1 cm.

How do I find out if I have a leak?

- 90 per cent of leaks in residential plumbing are found in the toilet tank. A simple test, where food colouring or a dye test tablet is placed in the tank, can be done. Within ten to fifteen minutes the colouring will appear in the toilet bowl if a leak is present. Dye test tablets can be found at various hardware stores and food colouring can be found in your local grocery store.
- To perform a test on the entire household, simply read the meter before going to bed, recording all of the digits and the exact position of the tenth column. Do not use any water before returning in the morning to read the meter again. If no water was used and the reading is different, this confirms that you have a plumbing leak and should proceed to identify the fixture(s) that is the source.
- Some homes have a sump pump. If you have one, check to see if it has water powered back up. If it does and there is an extended power outage you could be losing water directly into the pit without knowing it. Be sure to set your pump back to electricity power as soon as possible.

How can I decrease my water consumption?

- Install low flow showerheads and toilets
- Don't use toilets to dispose of dry waste
- Use a bucket with a sponge and don't leave water running while cleaning your car
- Sweep instead of hosing things down
- Make sure you only run your dishwasher and washer with a full load
- Your lawn only needs 1 to 2 inches per week including rainwater

Who owns the meter and who looks after it?

The City of St. Catharines owns the meter. A 15 year replacement plan is in place to ensure the accuracy of our meters. The Water/Wastewater By-law requires the homeowner to allow a City employee inside access to read, inspect and test our meter. Our target is to inspect and read every meter once per year.

Where is the water meter located in my house?

The water meter is typically located in the basement, along the front wall and near the floor. Other common places include basement washrooms and laundry rooms and crawl spaces.

Does the City have monthly Water/Wastewater billing?

Regular billings are every 4 months. We offer different pre-authorized debit payment plans. One is a monthly payment option. Go to the webpage named [Pre-authorized Debit Agreement Form – Water/Wastewater](#).

What is the average consumption of water in the City of St. Catharines?

The average household uses the equivalent of about 3 bathtubs of water each day which is approximately 170 cm's of water per year.

I'm moving and need to finalize my account. What should I do?

Please contact us prior to your moving date. You will be asked for the following information:

- The closing date
- A forwarding address
- A new telephone number
- Your lawyer's name and number

A meter reader will make every effort to obtain a reading on the day of or day before the closing date. However, if you are ready to vacate the premises, please read the meter and call us with a reading. A final bill will be sent to your new address. If we do not receive a reading, an estimate will be produced and it could be high. Contact us email at water@stcatharines.ca or by phone 905-688-5601 ext. 1427.

I have a tenant living in my property. Can you send the bill to them?

Yes, we can mail the water bills directly to the tenanted property, addressed to the owner c/o tenant, for a fee of \$32.30. A completed Tenant Mailing Contract, including a water meter reading, must be submitted to Water Billing. Call 905-688-5601 ext. 1432 or email water@stcatharines.ca for further information and to receive a copy of the required tenant mailing contract.