

1 Possible Causes of High Consumption

Our inspector may have carried out a test for leakage on your underground water supply pipe which showed there is no leakage taking place. However, leakage or waste can take place from other sources and in order to help you or your plumber eliminate these, please consider the following.

Water Softeners

Water softeners can sometimes contain a flushing device that, if faulty, allows water to run to waste, typically into a drain or waste pipe from a basin or sink. It can be checked by isolating the softener and watching the meter, or by following the pipework from the softener to where it discharges into the drains and looking for a permanent trickle of water from the waste pipe.

Toilets

Toilets installed after 2001 (with internal overflows):

Water continually running down the back of the toilet pan indicates a leaking overflow. This can be checked by looking for movement of water in the toilet pan at the water level, usually at the back, when the toilet has not recently been flushed and the cistern is full. The water in the pan should be still if there is no leakage taking place.

Toilets installed before 2001 (with external overflows):

Sometimes the toilet overflow or warning pipe is plumbed directly into the downpipe of the toilet or the waste pipes from basins or sinks. This is a contravention of the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations. To check this, look for the overflow pipes on the outside of your building in line with all toilet cisterns and water storage cisterns (these storage cisterns are usually in the loft or an airing cupboard above your hot water cylinder).

Dripping Taps or Overflows

These are usually easily seen, but in some circumstances they only run or drip at night when there may be a slight increase in pressure. Taps can be checked by leaving a container under them, whilst overflows can be checked by looking for dampness on the ground under them first thing in the morning before the sun has had a chance to dry the ground.

Unvented Hot Water Systems

On some modern pressurised unvented systems the pressure relief valve does not re-seat after discharging and then continues to leak. These are usually discharged via a pipe to a safe location, as near to the ground as possible to avoid any person being scalded by the hot water discharge when the valve is activated. Check for any water running from any pipe on the outside of your house, even small diameter pipes.

2 Possible Causes of High Consumption

Central Heating Systems

Some systems are filled from the main supply pipe by a small hose that links the heating system to the mains supply pipe. This hose, or temporary filling loop, should always be disconnected after filling, but is often left connected. There is usually a pressure gauge fitted on the closed heating system side of the hose connection which indicates when replenishment is required. If the filling loop is found still connected, disconnect it after turning off at both ends, and check the pressure gauge. If the pressure drops this indicates a fault or leak on the heating system that has been taking water from the incoming water supply, via the filling loop, to maintain pressure.

Swimming or Garden Pools

Some pools have automatic top-up devices which continually operate if the pool has a leak, or filtration devices that can malfunction leading to a rise in consumption. To check these, simply turn off the feed tap after marking the water level in the pool and see if there is any drop in level. The water running to waste may only occur when the filter is running.

Washing Machines and Dishwashers

The taps and hoses to these are often hidden behind sink units and should be checked for leaks.

Leaks on Hidden Pipework

The best way to check for leaks of this kind is to isolate all cisterns (toilets and storage) so they cannot fill. Most cisterns will have an isolating valve, or you can tie up the ball valve so it will not fill. Then watch the meter over a fifteen minute period during which time no consumption should register, unless a leak is occurring.

Leak Repairs

We have had cases where customers have had a fault repaired during the consumption period showing the increase, but had forgotten, or another member of the household had repaired a leak without informing the person who pays the account.

We hope this fact sheet will help you identify the cause of your high consumption. If you or your plumber find it was caused by another source we would be grateful if you could make us aware so we can assist other people experiencing the same problem.