

# Palomino Lakes Water Company Newsletter

August 2018

During the summer months, everyone uses more water. For the pool. For the garden. For washing off recreational equipment. And we notice leaks more, because high water use is more expensive, so you really notice an extra 100 gallons a day.

We aren't on mandated water conservation yet (see [here](#) for local lake levels), but it will happen...if not this year, then next. So, it pays to fix leaks sooner rather than later. The most common causes of leaks:

- Broken sprinkler / irrigation line or head / emitter
- Leaks spigot or hose bibb
- Malfunctioning sprinkler timer / watering computer
- Pool or fountain auto-fill valve
- Line breaks due to construction or heavy garden work
- Leaky faucets, toilets, or appliances

Some leaks can be devilish to find, but in most situations you can troubleshoot them in an hour or so:

- First step is to see if you have an ongoing/continuous leak. Turn everything off in your house and read your meter. See [this document](#) about how to do that. Watch the meter for 5 minutes: is the "spinner" or the clock-hand moving? Bad sign.
  - Check for leaky faucets or toilets in the house.
  - Check for broken lines between the meter and your house (check for unexpected green areas among the weeds--a sure fire sign of underground water).
- If there's no continuous leak, read your meter once a day (at about the same time) to see if your usage is spiking on particular days. If it's spiking on days you water, you need to do this:
  - First, make sure that your watering timer hasn't gone crazy...sometimes its little computer decides to water 5 times a day or not turn off for 10 hours (that's what got us...pesky computers!).
  - Grab your cell phone and get a friend with a cell phone to work with you. One of you sits and watches the meter, the other runs the watering system manually.
  - Start the watering system with the first "circuit" or "station"--let it run for a minute. When the watering valves first turn on, a gallon or more of water is quickly consumed, filling up the watering pipes. After that, if you have a drip watering system, the spinner should slow down quite a bit. Note the speed of the spinner once it has slowed down. Turn off the first circuit.
  - Start the second circuit and watch for the same usage pattern. Does the spinner slow down markedly? Cool...if not, that circuit is suspect.
  - Go through each of the circuits and identify the 1-2 biggest users.
  - Examine those circuits for (1) underground line cuts (from weeding, digging), (2) drip emitters that have fallen off their line, (3) leaky circuit valves. Also look along those circuits for excessive ground wetness (an indication of underground leaks). NOTE that even the best drip irrigation system needs annual maintenance, particularly if the drip lines are exposed to direct sunlight.

- You may find a circuit with high usage but no leaks: count the number of emitters on that circuit. We had one circuit I was sure was leaking, only to find that it had 50 emitters (those "drip line" emitters-embedded-in-the-hose systems are typically 2 emitters per foot of line, so they can be big consumers).
- If your usage spikes on **non**-watering days...figure out what's happening those days and look for where the consumption is happening. Busted hose? Leaky spigot? Messed-up pool filler valve? Usually, the problem is outside the house.
- If your usage **doesn't** spike (i.e., it's basically the same every day) but there's no usage when you're looking at the meter spinner...well, that's unusual. Typically, human activity isn't what drives up usage. If your "nothing's wrong" usage is high, see if you can "use water twice" by watering some of your plants with dishwater or water collected while you shower. If you have very thirsty trees/bushes, explore putting in a gray-water system (don't call a plumber for this...call the water company for a quick overview of what's involved).