

North Reading Water Department – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Where does our water come from?

North Reading's water source is groundwater, which is pumped from four wellfields located throughout the Town. North Reading also purchases water from the Town of Andover, and we maintain emergency interconnections with Wilmington, Reading, Middleton and Lynnfield.

Who do I contact in the event of a water emergency?

If the emergency occurs during the hours Town Hall is open – which are Monday to Thursday from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm and Friday from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm – please contact the Water Department at (978) 664-6060.

If the emergency occurs outside of those hours, please contact the North Reading Fire Department at (978) 664-3112.

Who do I contact if I am purchasing or selling a house?

Please contact the Water Billing office at (978) 664-6009. They will schedule a final water meter reading for the property transfer, and will assist with transferring the ownership of the water account.

Who do I contact about questions about my water bill?

For questions regarding water bills, please contact the Water Billing office at (978) 664-6009. Please bear in mind that water bills are based on actual water meter readings, and high water bills are normally the result of a high volume of water passing through the water meter, and can be due to outdoor lawn sprinkler use or a leak somewhere after the water meter.

How do I check for leaks in my home?

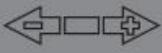


The water meter in your home or business will look similar to the meter on the left. The meter has a digital readout like a car odometer that records the number of gallons that have passed through the meter since it was installed. To activate the screen you will need to use a flashlight to charge the solar panel. Hold the light above the panel for 5-10 seconds and it will activate the screen. Once the screen is active it will go through a startup then display the usage through the meter. If you wait another 5-

10 seconds it will display the usage of the meter at that time in Gallons per hour (GPH). If water is being used it will display here for you to see.

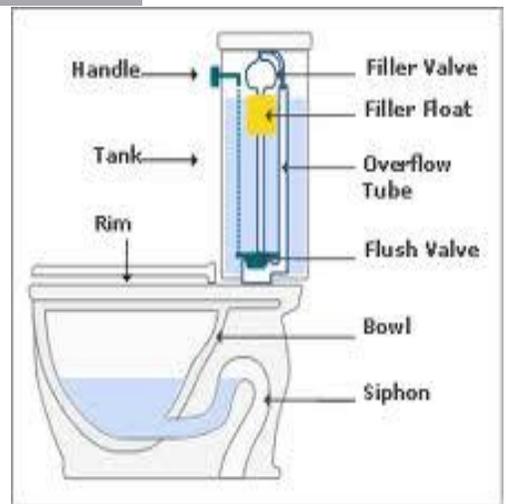
The most common source of high water bills due to leakage in homes is the result of leaks on toilets. If the display says water is being used when no water running in the house, there are two checks that should be made on each toilet in the house. First, lift the cover off the tank on the back of the toilet. There is an overflow pipe to prevent the tank from overflowing onto the floor in the event the toilet fill does not shut off. The water level in the tank should be approximately three-quarters of an inch (0.75 inch) below the top of the overflow pipe. The float that is used to shut off the fill to the toilet

can walk out of adjustment over time, causing the water level in the tank to rise to the point where water begins to flow into the overflow pipe.

	<p>FLOW INDICATOR Shows the direction of flow through the meter:</p> <p>ON Water in use. OFF Water not in use. Flashing Water is running slowly. (-) Reverse flow. (+) Forward flow.</p>
	<p>LEAK INDICATOR Displays a possible leak:</p> <p>OFF No leak indicated. Flashing Intermittent leak indicates that water has been used for at least 50 of the 96 15-minute intervals during the previous 24-hour period. On Continuously Indicates water use for all 96 15-minute intervals during the previous 24-hour period.</p>
<p>RATE</p>	<p>RATE OF FLOW Average flow rate is displayed every twelve (12) seconds on LCD display.</p>
	<p>LCD DISPLAY Nine-digit LCD displays the meter reading in billing units of measure: U.S. gallons, cubic feet, Imperial gallons, or cubic metres.</p> <p>1 E-Coder Basic Reading/Customary 6-digit remote reading 2 Customary sweep hand digits 3 E-CoderPLUS Reading (8-digit remote reading)</p>

This is a very silent and almost undetectable leak, but **this is the single most common leak the Water Department finds when investigating high water bills.** If you find this problem, the float on the toilet needs to be adjusted to lower the water level, based on the manufacturer's recommendations.

The second type of toilets leak allows water to leak from the tank into the bowl due to the flapper valve or flush valve not seating properly. To check for this type of leak, add a few drops of food color to the tank. If the color shows up in the bowl (without flushing the toilet), you have a leaking flapper valve.

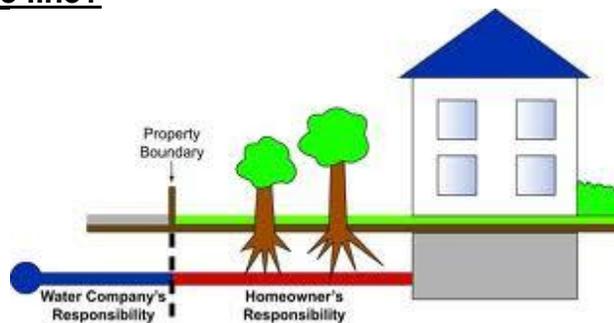


Leaks on underground piping – such as lawn irrigation systems – can also go unnoticed, and can waste a huge amount of water.

Other leaks, such as leaks on sinks or showers or even hoses, are more evident in that you can see or hear water dripping. Be aware that leaks – even very slow leaks – because they are running 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, can waste a large amount of water and increase your water bill significantly.

Who is responsible for my water service line?

The property owner both owns and is responsible for maintaining and repairing the water service line from the shutoff valve near the property line to the house or building. The Water Department is responsible for the water mains in the street and is responsible for the portion of the water service line from the water main to the shutoff valve near the property line.



Who do I contact with questions regarding my septic system?

For information regarding septic systems, please contact the North Reading Board of Health at (978) 664-6042.

Does North Reading add fluoride to the drinking water?

The North Reading Water Department adds fluoride to the water produced by North Reading's wells to maintain the recommended dose of 0.7 milligrams per liter (mg/L), which is equivalent to 0.7 parts per million (ppm) in the town's water supply, to promote dental health. The water we purchase from Andover also contains this level of fluoride.

Why does my water sometimes appear milky or discolored?

"Milky" or cloudy water is caused by tiny bubbles of air in the water. These bubbles do not make the water unsafe to drink, and will actually rise to the top of a glass of water if you let the water sit for a few minutes. Air can enter the pipes when a water main break is being repaired. While the Water Department tries to flush out all the air and discoloration following a break, sometimes pockets of this air get trapped in the pipes and slowly work their way out of the system, appearing as milky water.



The other cause of discolored water in North Reading is iron and manganese. Iron and manganese are naturally occurring minerals that are present in the sand and gravel around the wells. As precipitation percolates down through the soil, it dissolves small amounts of iron and manganese that is then present when the Town pumps the water from the wells.

Iron and manganese are not classified as health threats, and in fact the human body requires both iron and manganese (these are two of the components of most multivitamin pills). However, iron and manganese in water can cause a number of aesthetic problems, such as discoloration of the water, staining of laundry and staining of plumbing fixtures. Under the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, the EPA has established recommended limits of 0.30 mg/L for iron and 0.050 mg/L for manganese to minimize these problems. (Note – mg/L stands for milligrams per liter, which is the standard unit of measurement for many drinking water contaminants)

The water drawn from the wells contains approximately 4.00 mg/L of iron and 0.800 mg/L of manganese, both well in excess of the recommended limits. North Reading treats the water from our wells to remove both iron and manganese in order to achieve

a level below the recommended limits. This treatment is highly effective in reducing the iron and manganese, but it is not possible (nor practical) to remove all the iron and manganese, and the water in North Reading's water system contains low levels of iron and manganese.

The low levels of iron and manganese entering the North Reading water system from the sources do tend to settle out in the piping system before the water reaches your home, forming a very fine film of precipitated iron and manganese in the water mains. Any change in the flows in the water mains (such as when a fire hydrant is opened to fight a fire) will stir up this fine sediment and cause discolored water. This is the reason the Water Department also conducts an annual "flushing" of the water system through the fire hydrants. This scheduled change in flows helps to remove the accumulated iron and manganese in a programmed way to help minimize discolored water.