

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is my water bill so high?

An unusually high water bill is most often caused by a leak or change in water use.

Some common causes of high water bills include:

- A leaking toilet, or a toilet that continues to run after being flushed
- A dripping faucet; a faucet drip can waste 20 gallons of water a day or more
- Filling or topping off a swimming pool
- Watering the lawn, new grass, or trees; also check for an open hose bib
- Kids home for summer vacations or school holidays; guests
- Water-cooled air conditioners
- A broken water pipe or obvious leak; check the pipes in the basement or crawlspace; the water heater could also be leaking
- Running the water to avoid freezing water pipes during cold weather

Changes in your water use

Did you have house guests, water your lawn more than usual, or do anything else out of the ordinary in the last month that uses a lot of water? If so, this may account for an increase in your water bill.

Check for leaks

Leaks, whether unseen or unfixed, can waste hundreds and even thousands of gallons of water. It is important to routinely check your plumbing and home for leaky faucets, toilets, and outside taps and irrigation lines.

Toilet and faucet leaks

The most common cause for a high water bill is running water from your toilet. A continuously running toilet can waste up to 200 gallons a day. That can double a family's typical water use, so fix toilet leaks as soon as possible. Some leaks are easy to find, such as a dripping faucet or running toilet. You can usually hear a running toilet, but not always.

Outdoor and underground leaks

Leaks can also occur in harder to find places, such as under your house or in the service line between your water meter and your home. Check outdoor spigots and crawl spaces, and look for wet spots in your yard, which may indicate a leak.

My water has an odor. What should I do?

If the "cold" water smells, contact the Public Utilities office and we will schedule the lines in the vicinity of your home or business to be flushed. Once the lines have been flushed, you will also need to flush the lines inside your house or business. If it is the "hot" water that smells, it is likely to be your water heater and you will need to contact a plumber.

Why is my water discolored?

Cloudy water is caused by tiny air bubbles in the water similar to the gas bubbles in carbonated soft drinks. After a while, the bubbles rise to the top and are gone. This type of cloudiness occurs more often in the winter, when the drinking water is cold. Potential Solution: Let the water run for a short period of time and check periodically for water clarity. If the discoloration continues, please call Sampson County Public Works at 910-592-0188 or 910-385-9040 for service after regular business hours.

Rusty brown water may be caused when the water tank is rusting or water pipes in the street leading to your home are rusting. If you are having trouble and your neighbors are not, then your own pipes and water heater are possibly rusting. A licensed plumber may need to correct this problem.

Almost all water pipes have a thin film of rust and harmless sediment on the inside of them. Although this thin film causes no problems, over time it can build up to the point that a slight increase in water velocity can cause it to break loose from the interior pipe wall. This material causes your tap water to appear discolored or dirty. Normally discolored water is the result of high water demands throughout the distribution system. Public Works performs flushing of the water mains in your area to remove sediment before it reaches your home or business.

Is the discolored water that I am experiencing in my home/business safe to drink?

Even though discolored water is not harmful, we realize it's not aesthetically pleasing either. Whether or not you feel comfortable drinking the water is a personal decision and an understandable one. If at any time Sampson County water is deemed unsafe to drink, you will be notified by Public Works with guidance from the State of North Carolina's Division of Environmental Quality immediately through an automated phone call. During more localized events that may occur, a door hanger will be placed on your front door by a Public Works technician.

My water pressure is low. Why?

When water flow starts strong and drops after a few seconds, this could indicate a problem with the pressure reducing valve (PRV) on the customer line. This can be resolved by checking to see if the setting on your pressure reducing valve is set too low or by having it replaced.

If there is a water main break or hydrant being used for flushing nearby, this could reduce pressure for a temporary period of time. In this case your neighbors may also experience low pressure.

Low pressure can also be caused by a leak on the customer side.

I am not receiving my water bill. What should I do?

Contact the Public Works office and verify the billing address provided for the account. If the billing address is correct, you will need to contact your local post office.

I never see anyone reading my meter, do you estimate meter readings?

Radio read meter readings are taken using an automatic meter reading system. "Sampson County" vehicles with a special radio receiver drive by and readings are recorded using low frequency radio sensors on the meters. Estimated meter readings are used only if a natural disaster prevents actual reads.

I made a payment recently and it doesn't reflect on my latest bill. Why?

The bill was generated before your payment was processed.

How can I sign up for bank draft?

Complete a form for bank draft and provide a voided check. The form is online or can be obtained by contacting our office.

Can I get an extension on paying my water bill?

There is no provision for payment extensions. Current bills are due the 20th of each month. Please see your monthly water bill statement for past due/cut off date.