

The Hydrant



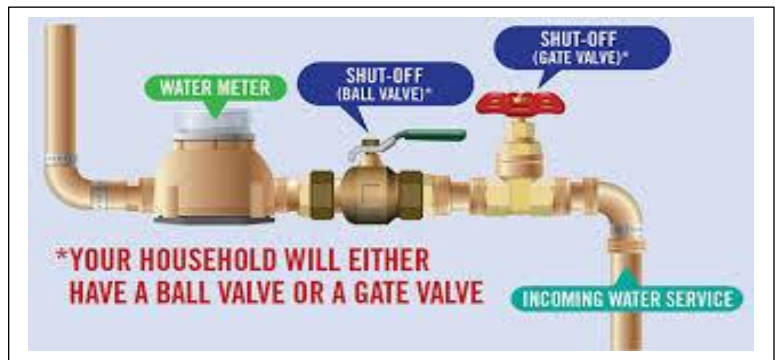
Oh NO! I Have a Leak!

Perhaps you have received a message from Cape San Juan Water District Manager, Sherri Phelps, notifying you of a spinning meter and an unusually high reading, or maybe you can hear or see running water somewhere in your home or on your property. Now, what?

SHUT OFF THE SUPPLY OF WATER. Most homes have a shut-off valve at the house and you will have a shut-off valve at your meter. Start by closing the shut-off valve at your meter. A water meter key wrench is a handy tool for turning the valve. If you don't have one, ask your neighbor or call anyone on the water board. Be careful not to turn it too tight. When the meter stops spinning and you feel resistance, stop. If the valve seems frozen, do not force it.

Locating shut-off valves at your house can be tricky if you are not the original homeowner. They can be somewhat hidden beneath a removable deck plank, or behind a small access panel inside the home. These are typically found on the side of the house facing the street since the water main usually follows a straight line from the street to the house. If you still can't locate the home shut-off, review the section on plumbing from your home inspection report.

House valves can be a ball valve or a gate valve. A ball valve has a straight handle that runs parallel to the pipe when open; turn the handle 90-degrees to the perpendicular position to close it. A gate valve will have a cute round handle that turns clockwise.



FINDING THE LEAK: If it's not obvious where the leak is, isolate the line from the street to the house. In other words, after you've shut the water off at the house, open the valve at the meter and see if the meter starts spinning again. If it does, then the leak is between the street and your house. Let's say that's where it is, since this was my most recent experience. Eyeball a straight line from the meter to your house, unless you are lucky enough to know where your water line actually runs. Look for greener spots, wet places, sunken areas. Check at the main valve for corrosion of valves or leaks at the fittings. Check outdoor spigots, irrigation systems, and think about where recent work may have been done, such as planting fence posts, trees, etc., that may have punctured a line. If you can't find it, you have two choices. If you feel lucky, hire an excavator to start digging along the line until the leak is found, or you can dig yourself. Your other choice is to replace the entire service line. As reported in the May 2019 Hydrant, "some of the water service lines at the Cape are getting to the end of their useful life and/or were installed with inferior pipe and fittings...failures are beginning to occur more frequently with substantial loss of water and costs to property owner." If your line is in such condition, it may be more cost effective now, and in the long run, to pay for a new line. The most common material currently used is PEX, which is superior to what was used originally. If you do replace your line, contact Sherri for the current \$250 rebate for doing so. Another positive side of putting in a new line is the opportunity to add a conduit to run fiber for high-speed internet.

PEX Pipes



PEX pipe connectors

IF EXCAVATION IS REQUIRED, CALL THE UTILITY NOTIFICATION CENTER at 811 at least two days before you dig to request locaters to identify where your utility lines are. You can also schedule this service online at www.callbeforeyoudig.org.

The Utility Notification Center is a one-call agency open 24/7 "dedicated to safeguarding citizens and construction personnel who work around utilities, as well as safeguarding the underground infrastructure of pipes, mains and lines which bring utilities to your community." Not only that, but property owners and contractors are strictly liable if they damage underground utility lines when they dig. Opalco will mark the power lines along the main street to your power box; they will not locate the line from the box to your house, which is shocking, but don't worry, any excavator you hire will bring their own locator device for power lines. Your cable and phone company will also send representatives. Keep in mind, the marks are only accurate to within two-feet on either side.

HIRING AN EXCAVATOR (OR A PLUMBER): Good Luck. These people are unusually busy for lots of reasons. Call all of them and keep calling. Get a quote for their hourly rate and see what it includes, and try to get a company that will do both the trenching and the pipe install, otherwise you may have an open trench for several days before you can schedule a plumber to finish the job. Some excavators coordinate the work with a plumber for you.

If you are without water for a period of time, turn the water on and off as you need it and/or install a temporary line with a hose.

Below is a list of local contractors that have provided repair and inspection services in the past (all phone numbers are 360 area code):

Lawson (Chris) Excavation	378-2813	MEM Enterprises	378-8703
Black Family Enterprises	378-4928	J&M Excavation	378-4374
Evans (Jeff) Excavation	378-5514	Harvey's Excavation	317-8106
Forrest and Erin Excavation	622-6436	Richard Foster	298-4658



IF THE LEAK IS IN YOUR HOUSE OR PROPERTY: If it's not obvious, begin isolating lines to anything that uses water such as toilets, washing machines, dishwashers, and water filtration systems. If you have a crawl space beneath your home, you may be able to easily locate the source, as the plumbing lines will be exposed.

KEEP SHERRI IN THE LOOP. Sherri has a deep well of knowledge concerning leaks and all things related to water systems. Don't hesitate to contact her for additional information — and talk to your neighbors for referrals and recommendations. You'd be surprised how many people have been through this process.

Cape San Juan Water District Budget

Each month, the Water Commissioners and the Water District Manager meet to review the monthly District expenses and income. In addition to reviewing the monthly data, we discuss how we are performing relative to the annual budget. An annual budget is developed in the 4th quarter each year based on previous years' experience and anticipated changes. Some changes are difficult to anticipate. Our insurance expense for 2022 jumped by 40 percent! Other water districts saw similar jumps. The budget also projects annual revenue streams and expenditures including any expected capital improvements and additions. For example, the current budget includes approximately \$25,000 for replacement of water valves and hydrants. The total budget for 2022 is approximately \$89,000. Our revenue forecast shows we will have a small operating deficit this year, primarily due to the jumps in insurance costs and the costs of water testing and treatment chemicals.

In addition to revenue from normal water consumption, the District receives revenue from two other sources. A few years ago, an intertie was made to the Cattle Point Water District for emergency use. This tie has been used to provide water to Cattle Point when they have operational issues with their reverse osmosis water treatment equipment. Revenue from those water sales is added to our "rainy day fund." Also, our rules allow us to assess penalties to customers who use excessive amounts of water. Excess water use can result from leaks or excessive irrigation. Funds from penalties are also added to the rainy-day fund and are invested in interest bearing accounts. Why do we need a rainy-day fund? The primary reason is to fund repairs or replacements that were not anticipated in the normal budget process. We also believe it to be prudent to build funds for future water infrastructure. As has been discussed elsewhere the amount of fresh water in our aquifer is an unknown. What is known is that the dissolved chlorides in the water have been increasing, likely due to saltwater intrusion. If this trend continues, we may be faced with a significant investment such as installation of a reverse osmosis system. Therefore, we will continue to invest in our rainy-day fund to hopefully avoid the need for a supplementary assessment from our friends and neighbors when the time comes to find new water resources. Of course, careful use of our precious water supply through good conservation practices will help push that into the future!



Thank you, thank you...

Many people should be thanked, some going back a bit:

- Ken O'Brien, Betsy Cooper and Clark Munroe – for many years of service as water commissioners. The Water District is in such good shape because of their hard work.
- Your several neighbors who checked dozens of meters (without being asked) to help us track down the major water leak when the snow was so deep that Sherri couldn't get down her driveway.
- All of you who voted for Luci on the last election. We broke the Washington election program: They had never had a write-in candidate who won an election before, so hadn't coded for that possibility!

Water Board Commissioners
Luci Francis 360-622-5126
Roger Hill 425-753-6560
David Rumolo 360-370-5405

Water System Manager and Administrative Officer
Sherri Phelps 360-317-8335 sjwawater@gmail.com

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