

Conservation News

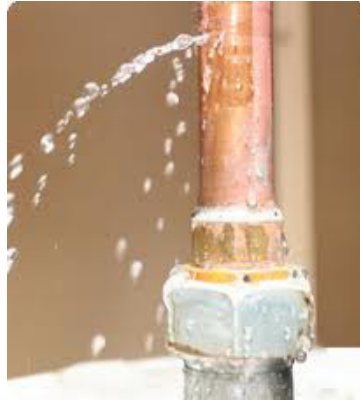


Environmental News and Information from the City of Melbourne
Public Works & Utilities Department ~ Environmental Community Outreach Division

Leaks can lead to huge water losses and bills

Signs and Symptoms of Leaks

There are several indicators of leaks for plumbing, pools, irrigation systems, and underground pipes to watch out for. If the plumbing inside your house is leaking, a continuous sound of water running might be heard when nothing is turned on. Finding wet, spongy, or discolored areas on the



floor when nothing has been spilled or finding warm spots on your floor, particularly concrete slabs, are also indicators. If foul odors are coming from the floors or walls, a leak might exist. Always remember to check in the hard-to-see areas like under the sink for possible leaks. Residents should monitor their water bills and meters to ensure there are no steady increases in usage.

Pool Leaks

When a pool is built, more possibilities for leaks arise. Pools can leak through any of the fittings or accessories, plumbing, or even through the shell. Initially pools are watertight, but sealants will deteriorate while other parts of the pool shift and settle or just wear out.

When algae forms too soon

after a chemical treatment, loose or falling tiles are in the pool, cracks form in the deck, or standing water, mushy spots, and uneven grass growth is occurring around the pool, or the pool is routinely losing two inches of water in a week, it's time to check for leaks. If the pool is leaking only with the equipment on, a pressure-side return leak is likely. Check the waste or backwash line for water consistently running.

If the pool is leaking only with the equipment off, this usually indicates a suction-side leak. With the filter pump on, the plumbing on the suction side is under vacuum. Air can be drawn in through otherwise leaking voids. Check to ensure the O-ring on the pump basket lid is greased and not cracked.

If there is a constant leak, the shell of the pool might have cracks in the plaster or tears in the vinyl. One of the most common leaks is a separation between the plastic skimmer and the concrete pool, which is easily fixed with pool putty. Also, underwater lights need to have tight seals, so check the opening of the conduit in the back of the light and fill with putty, silicone, or caulk if needed. Observe the equipment pad as well. Turning off and on

the pump is an easy way to check for water spraying or small drips.

Underground Pipes

Several observations can be made to find a leak within the underground pipes. Unusual wet spots or dead, brown spots in landscaped areas or an area that is green, moldy, soft, or mossy surrounded by drier conditions might signify a leak. A notable drop in water pressure and flow volume is another indicator. A sudden problem with rusty water or dirt or air in the water supply could be a sign, however, there are other causes. Heaving or cracking of paved areas, sink holes, potholes, uneven floor grade, or leaning of a structure are all significant markers for leaks underground.

Leak Detection Tests

To determine if a leak is probable, simple tests to perform at home are available. For in-house plumbing issues, a meter test is the quickest



and cheapest alternative. Ensure all water is turned off, including ice makers. Record the numbers or sweep hand indicated on the water meter. Return 30 minutes later and check the reading. If there is

Please turn the page



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no change, there are no leaks. If there is a change, shut off the valves under all toilets in the house and repeat the process. If the numbers didn't change, you may have a running toilet that should be repaired. Leak detection kits for toilets are avail-



able free of charge from the City of Melbourne or food coloring can be used instead. Add the food coloring or dye tablets to the toilet tank and let it settle. If after 15 minutes the color is observed in the toilet bowl, the flap-valve or other components inside the toilet tank need to be replaced.

If the numbers did change, this indicates water consumption even though water was not being used during the test, and you may need to test the pipes for leaks. If a leak is suspected underground, a professional leak detection company may be required to pinpoint its exact location and a contractor hired to perform repairs. Professional systems to detect and alert are available as handheld water alarms or ceiling guards that detect moisture before damage occurs and send out a signal. Also, they have water alarms that detect, alert, and shut off flow automatically.

For pools, a bucket test is the simplest way to determine if the water loss is due to evaporation or a leak. Evaporation is dependent on humidity, sunlight intensity, barometric pressure, wind, and activity



within the pool, so each residence is different. To perform the test, bring the pool to its normal level. Fill a five gallon bucket with pool water about 3-4" from the top. Place the bucket on the first or second step of the pool to cover it as much as possible. Mark the water level on the inside of the

bucket. Shut off the pump and mark the pool level on the outside of the bucket. Resume normal pump operation and make sure the auto/manual fill valve is off during test. After 24 hours, compare the levels. If the pool water goes down more than the inside water level of the bucket, there may be a leak.

What We Can Do

If we all do our part in acknowledging the problem and fixing the leaks, a large portion of our drinking water will be saved.



The American Leak Detection states that a 1/8" hole at 40 psi leaks 75,000 gallons per month, and a pinhole at this pressure leaks 30,000 gallons per month. A leaking toilet can use up to 90,000 gallons per month. If a dripping faucet fills an 8 ounce glass in 15 minutes, it will lose about 180 gallons per month.

Using a pool cover prevents about 1,000 gallons per month from evaporation. Staying on top of water leaks in a home, pool or underground can help your budget as well as conserve a precious natural resource.

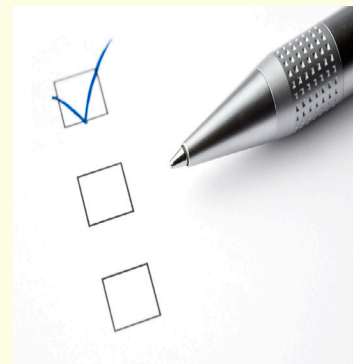
Be a Part of the Survey – Your Florida Yard and You!

By Sally Scalera/Urban Horticulture Agent

The Brevard County UF/IFAS Extension Service and experts from the University of Florida are launching a new project and we need your help. We are conducting a survey of homeowners to determine your landscaping knowledge. We want to help you save both time and money and also improve the health of the environment by using Florida

Friendly Landscaping™ principles. In Brevard County, the water quality in our lakes, ponds and canals has a direct impact on the health of the Indian River Lagoon, which is a waterway of major concern.

The results of the survey will be used to develop educational programs but we need your help. Your



participation is voluntary and you do not have to answer any question that you do not wish to answer. Your answers will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law and your name will not be used in any report; only your answers will be used and combined with other respondents' answers. The survey will take about 15 minutes to complete.

You can complete the survey on-line by going to the following web site:

<http://pdec.ifas.ufl.edu/evaluation/hoa.pl>

If you prefer not to complete the survey on-line there are printed surveys available upon request. In Melbourne, you can pick up a copy at the Public Works & Utilities Administration office, located at 2885 Harper Road. Ask for Jennifer Wilster or call her at 953-6302.

For your efforts, you will be eligible to pick up a free copy of the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Handbook. All that is needed is an e-mail address so that you can receive a follow up e-mail that you will need to print and bring with you to Melbourne's Public Works & Utilities office to pick up your free copy of the FYN Handbook. If you complete a paper copy of the survey, you can turn it in for a copy of the handbook. In addition, there are nine other locations where you can pick up your copy.

Wanted: Adopt-a-Road Groups

Melbourne has 18 active Adopt-a-Road groups, along with local resident Dick Elliott, who personally takes care of cleaning up the areas around Sarno Road. Since last October, these groups have collected 49 bags of trash which equates to 980 pounds. In addition, Mr. Elliot has collected an astounding 602 bags, equalling 12,040 pounds. If you or your organization would like to start an Adopt-a-Road team, please call or e-mail Jennifer Thompson, Environmental Programs Coordinator at 953-6302 or jthompson@melbourneflorida.org