



## Cape Town Water Map: Frequently Asked Questions

Last updated: 23 February 2018

The map shows water use information derived from the City of Cape Town municipal billing system. Your water usage indicated on the map may differ from actual use, due to meter malfunctions, water leaks on the meter, meter reading errors and other errors.

### Why do some houses use more water than others?

Houses with one or two occupants are expected to use less water than those with a higher number of occupants.

Some households have valid reasons for higher than average usage. These include:

- Backyard dwellers or occupants in “granny flats”
- High number of occupants or guests staying in the house
- Operating a home business or B&B on the property
- Recently completed building work
- Water leaks that the occupants are unaware of (this happens frequently)

However, in other cases, the occupants are either not doing enough to save water, or may be unaware of an underground water leak, a leaking toilet, a dripping expansion valve or another problem.

### What must I do if my household uses more than 50 litres per person per day?

Reduce your water use immediately (if you have not done so already).

Start doing these basic things:

1. [Check for leaks and fix them immediately](#)
2. Capture all basin, bath and shower water for toilet flushing. [Find out how to work with greywater safely.](#)
3. [Fit your taps with aerators and your shower with a low-flow showerhead](#)
4. Stop flushing your toilet as regularly; if it's yellow, let it mellow

[Find out how to save water in the home](#)

[Download our water saving resources for your home and office](#)

### What can I do about households in my neighbourhood that use more than 50 litres per person per day?

Most importantly, don't behave aggressively or shame your neighbour on social media. During this crisis we all need to work together, not alienate each other.

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High users are often unaware of their usage, but willing to change their behaviour once approached. In many cases, high water users have become Cape Town's best water champions once they have become aware of their usage levels.

Approach your neighbour politely, leave a note on their door or send a respectful email or text message. You can also raise this with neighbourhood groups in your area in order to collectively manage water usage in your area.

Remember that usage higher than 10 500 litres per month does not necessarily indicate water abuse. There are many legitimate reasons for this, as mentioned above.

### **Remember:**

- Accurate water usage can take up to two months to show up on the map, so the problem could be resolved during that time.
- At this stage, we are unable to water usage for group housing or properties with an estimated water reading. This will be added in time.
- In rare cases, there may be an error in the water usage information, the property may have the incorrect tariff land-use code or the usage information could be linked to the incorrect property on the map.

### **Why are estimated usage readings used for some properties?**

We aim to read all water meters once a month. However, there are more than 600 000 water meters in Cape Town and some are not read every month for a variety of reasons, but usually because the person tasked with reading the water meter is unable to access it.

Estimated water usage is shown as a grey dot on the map.

If your meter is inside your property you can log a [Service Request](#) to have it relocated so it can be read.

If your meter is often estimated, you could submit your meter reading yourself, using e-Services. You can [register for e-Services](#), then activate the municipal accounts service and enter your monthly water meter readings.

### **If I received an estimated bill in January or February 2018, why is it different to my November or December 2017 bills?**

As of 1 January 2018, the City moved from a third party electronic platform to an in-house electronic interface system for the uploading of monthly water meter readings. Since this move, there have been technical challenges with uploading meter readings to the new system. As a result, some customers will receive estimated bills although their meter was read. Customers across the City will be affected.

Where residents receive estimated bills, the City recommends that they settle the account as they would normally. If the estimate is higher than the actual usage then their account will be adjusted appropriately the next time the actual meter reading is captured. In cases where estimated use far exceeds actual water use, and residents are unable to afford the bill, they can approach the City's call centre or their closest walk-in centre to request an investigation. Debt management will be suspended until the investigation is resolved.

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Please note that estimated bills are currently based on water use for the same period in the previous year. For example, a meter estimate for January 2018 is based on the actual usage of January 2017. This method is used to account for seasonal variation in water use. The City is however working to adapt the estimation method to account for changing water use patterns due to the current water shortage. From 1 March 2018, estimated accounts will be based on average use at the property for the previous three months.

### **How will estimated readings affect my green dot status on the water map?**

Estimated readings could affect your green dot status on the City's Water Map. Residents who have had their water use estimated will rather be given a grey dot reflecting that no data exists for use on the property. Whilst this will cause some disappointment, it is important that we all continue to do our best to save water.

### **How are the monthly usage indicators calculated?**

Approximately 30 000 water meters are read every day throughout Cape Town. They are read once a month and an average daily usage is calculated for the period that has elapsed since the last reading.

The period between two meter readings will differ in different areas, depending on the date the reading is scheduled. If the meter is not read, the City's computer system estimates a reading based on previous use.

An average daily consumption is extracted for all single residential properties, for each month, and the values are converted to kilolitres for an "average month" (365 days ÷ 12 months).

**Remember:** The usage will not necessarily agree with your water bill. Even though your water bill is calculated on the same water meter reading or estimated reading, it is based on a billing period that may be longer or shorter than an "average month".

### **Why don't I have a dot on my property? My water use is less than 10.5 kilolitres per month (as per level 6 restriction guidelines).**

The average daily water use benchmark of 0.197 kilolitres is required for a dark green dot and 0.345 kilolitres is required for a light green dot. If your monthly use exceeds 0.345 your property will not be eligible for a dot indicator.

The benchmarks are based on an "average month" and are calculated as follows:

- Dark green dot:  $0.197 \text{ kilolitres per day} \times 365/12 = 6.0 \text{ kilolitres per month}$
- Light green dot:  $0.345 \text{ kilolitres per day} \times 365/12 = 10.5 \text{ kilolitres per month}$

**Please note** that the daily average used for this calculation may differ from the daily average reflected in your latest municipal account due to differences in billing period. Depending on when your meter was read, this may be influenced by the daily average of your previous or subsequent municipal account.

### **Where do I find my average daily usage?**

Your average daily usage can be found on the reverse side of your monthly municipal account under the *water* section. Alternatively, you can monitor your water use online using [e-Services](#).

**Remember:** The usage will not necessarily agree with your water bill. Even though your water bill is calculated on the same water meter reading or estimated reading, it is based on a billing period that may be longer or shorter than an “average month”.

### **Why are water usage indicators “missing” for some properties?**

There are several reasons why information may be “missing” for some properties:

- Water use is only provided for single residential properties and not group housing, flats, commercial, industrial properties or other land-uses.
- Water use for properties using more than 10 500 litres per month or those based on estimated readings are not shown in phase one.
- Properties consisting of multiple erven will only have usage information linked to one property.
- Usage will also be missing for properties where there is a problem with the data, although this is relatively rare. Some single residential properties may have the incorrect land-use tariff category assigned to them or we may have been unable to assign the information to the correct property on the map.

### **What if I disagree with my water usage?**

Remember, the usage indicated on the map may include water use from up to two months previously and therefore will differ from what is indicated on your municipal account.

The information shown on the Water map is NOT used for billing purposes.

If you still disagree, you may send an email to [water.map@capetown.gov.za](mailto:water.map@capetown.gov.za) including your account number, your address, your erf number (number shown on your property on the map) and copies/photographs of your **last three water bills**. We will attempt to investigate all reported errors, but please understand that in the context of this crisis, we may not always have resources to look into every single reported error.

### **Are there errors in the data?**

Cape Town usage data is fairly accurate; however, no billing system is 100% correct. Cape Town is a large city with more than 600 000 properties and even a small error rate will result in what may appear to be a large number of errors, e.g. a 1% error rate will translate to 6 000 errors.

If you are one of the relatively small number of properties with incorrect billing, we apologise in advance. Please bear with us. We trust that you will understand that we are providing greater transparency in water usage, which is especially necessary to avoid Day Zero – even though the data may contain a small number of errors. We applaud every individual whose water consumption is within limits, even if it is not displayed on the map.

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If you think there is an error in the water use shown for your household, please send an email to [water.map@capetown.gov.za](mailto:water.map@capetown.gov.za) including your account number, your address, your erf number (number shown on your property on the map) and copies/photographs of your last three water bills. We will attempt to investigate all reported errors, but please understand that in the context of this crisis, we may not always have resources to look into every single reported error.

### **What should I do if I wish to make a suggestion, report a technical problem or have a complaint or objection?**

You may send an email to [water.map@capetown.gov.za](mailto:water.map@capetown.gov.za).