

43 Ways to Save \$\$\$ on Utility Bills – Consider Submetering

By Gerald Baker

Worried about the rising cost of utilities? Utility recovery falling short of expectations? Submetering and utility management programs can:

- Recapture more of your utility expenses.
- Increase conservation among your consumer.
- Keep your rents and associations fees competitive.
- Significantly increase the value of your property

Unrecovered utility costs have long been a challenge for property management and without a reliable way to measure utility consumption, residents have no incentive to conserve their usage. A utility management program featuring submetering or RUBS billing can significantly impact your utility cost recovery. Some facts to know when considering submetering your building are:

1. Utility Submetering Increases Utility Cost Recovery

Whether utilizing a submetering or RUBS program, thousands of multi-unit properties have slashed utility costs by providing utility billing services.

2. Utility Submetering Equipment Installation Is Affordable

Many factors go into choosing a submetering system, including size of property, construction materials, and topography. It is possible for you to obtain financing and payment plans that allow you to save money from day one.

3. Utility Submetering Adds Curb Appeal

Adding utility submeters to your multi-unit property will drastically improve the property's value.

4. Utility Submetering Reduces Utility Consumption

Consumers (tenants) who are responsible for their own usage use less.

5. Utility Submetering Identifies Problems

Metering utilities at the unit level can highlight problems such as running toilets, dripping faucets, and other cost-inflating problems.

6. Utility Submetering and Utility Billing

Accurate easy-to-read bills are mailed directly to your tenants.

7. Utility Submetering and Online Reporting

Tenants can access their statements online, anytime. Services are also available with online account access to you and your staff, featuring billing ledgers, past due reports, and resident statements.

8. Utility Submetering and Payment Options

Because your time is valuable, you are offered a variety of payment options, including online and phone methods using major credit cards or checking accounts, as well as in-house collections!

9. Utility Submetering or RUBS: Which should you choose?

Sometimes utility submeters cannot be installed due to space or local regulations. RUBS (Ratio Utility Billing) can help you realize utility costs savings. RUBS allocates your property's utility costs among your consumers based on several common factors.

How to Save Water Inside

- Verify that your home is leak-free. Read your water meter before and after a two-hour period when no water is being used. If the meter does not read exactly the same, there is a leak.
- Repair dripping faucets by replacing the washers. If your faucet is dripping at a rate of one drop per second, you can waste up to 2,000 gallons per month.
- Check for toilet tank leaks by adding food coloring to the tank. If the toilet is leaking, color will appear in the toilet bowl within 30 minutes. Check the toilet for worn out, corroded or bent parts. Most replacement parts are inexpensive, readily available and easily installed. A leaking toilet can waste thousands of gallons of water every month.
- Avoid flushing the toilet unnecessarily. Dispose of tissues, insects and other similar waste in the trash rather than the toilet.
- Install a displacement device or water conserving toilet flapper. Be sure the installation does not interfere with the operating parts. When purchasing new or replacement toilets, consider a quality low-volume unit provided it meets local code.
- Replace your existing showerhead with an ultra-low-flow version. Some units are available that allow you to cut off the flow without adjusting the water temperature knobs.
- Don't let water run while shaving, washing, or brushing teeth. Up to 30 gallons per use, per day may be saved.
- Retrofit all household faucets by installing aerators with flow restrictors.
- Operate automatic dishwashers and clothes washers only when they are fully loaded. Set the water level for the correct size load.
- When washing dishes by hand, fill one sink or basin with soapy water. Quickly rinse under a slow-moving stream from the faucet.
- Store drinking water in the refrigerator. Don't let the tap run while you are waiting for cool water to flow.
- Don't use running water to thaw meat or frozen foods. Defrost overnight in the refrigerator or use the defrost setting on the microwave.
- Consider installing an instant water heater on your kitchen sink so you don't have to let the water run while it heats up. This will reduce water-heating costs for your household.
- Insulate your water pipes. You'll get hot water faster and avoid wasting water while it heats up.

How to Save Water Outside

- Don't over-water your lawn. As a general rule, lawns only need watering every five to seven days in the summer and every 10-14 days in the winter. A hearty rain eliminates the need for watering for up to two weeks. Use a rain gauge to determine the amount of rainfall your lawn has received.
- Don't allow sprinklers to water your street, driveway or other non-beneficial surface. Position sprinklers so water lands on the lawn and shrubs and not on paved areas.
- Install irrigation devices that are the most water-efficient. Micro- and drip-irrigation and soakers provide great results without waste.
- Check sprinkler systems and timing devices regularly to be sure they operate properly. Adjust for the season, rainfall and plants.
- Raise the lawn mower blade at least three inches or to its highest level. A higher cut encourages grass root system to grow deeper, shades the root system and holds soil moisture better than a closely clipped lawn. Contact local gardening experts for specifics.
- Avoid over-fertilizing your lawn. Fertilizer applications increase the need for water. Apply fertilizers that contain slow release, water-insoluble forms of nitrogen.
- Use mulch to retain moisture in the soil. Mulch also helps control weeds that compete with landscape plants for water.
- Plant native and / or drought resistant grasses, ground covers, shrubs, and trees. Once established, they do not need water as frequently and usually will survive a dry period without watering. Group plants together, based on similar water needs. (Consult your state's Native Plant Society for more information.)
- Do not hose down driveways or sidewalks. Use a broom or blower to clean leaves and other debris from these areas.
- Use a shut-off nozzle on your hose, which can be adjusted down to a fine spray so that water flows only as needed. When finished, turn it off at the faucet instead of at the nozzle to avoid leaks. Check hose connectors to make sure plastic or rubber washers are in place. Washers prevent leaks.
- Do not leave sprinklers or hoses unattended. A garden hose can pour out 600 gallons or more in one hour. Use a kitchen timer to remind yourself to turn the sprinklers off.
- Consider using a commercial car wash that recycles water. If you wash your own car, park on the grass and use a hose with an automatic shut-off nozzle.

Save Gas & Energy

- Keep your air ducts free from obstructions.
- Turn off everything not in use: lights, TVs, computers, etc.
- If you have baseboard heating, keep the baseboards free from obstructions.
- Rearrange furniture that is blocking air ducts or heating registers.
- Dust or vacuum air ducts, registers, radiators and refrigerator coils regularly.
- During winter months, keep shades and blinds open during the day to allow sunlight and heat into your home.
- At night close shades and blinds to slow heat loss through the glass.

- Set your thermostat at 65°-68° F during the winter while you're home during the day. Lower it at night or while you're away to 55°-58° F. Please note that people with medical problems may require a higher setting.
- If possible, use a humidifier in the winter. Moist air feels warmer and you can set your thermostat lower.
- Replace damaged weather stripping around doors and windows.
- Seal windows with plastic film to keep out drafts.
- Keep furnace filters clean. A dirty filter increases heating costs.
- If you have a fireplace, make sure the damper is closed when not in use.
- Have your heating unit checked to see if it's running properly.
- Run dishwashers only when they are full. This will help reduce water and energy heating expenses.
- Whenever possible, wash clothes in cold water. Most laundry detergents work effectively in cold water.
- Here is a link to the U.S. Department of Energy's Consumer Guide to Energy Efficiency. The guide contains additional energy saving tips.
www.eere.energy.gov/consumer.
- Consider submetering your apartments!

Gerald Baker is President and Owner of National Exemption Service, Inc., (NES) which has provided comprehensive Utility Management products and services since 1968. For more information, call (800) 572-7060 or visit www.submeter.com.