

## Dealing With House Water Pressure

The Water Oak subdivision is only one-block off the town's main water artery that runs parallel to River Highway (NC-150). Thus, we're blessed with continually strong water pressure for our homes. That said, the water pressure in our homes needs to be maintained at the proper level to service our household plumbing fixtures and certain appliances.

All Water Oak homes have a pressure regulator valve, normally in the laundry room. A photo of one is on the left. These valves units contain a spring and a diaphragm that can potentially fail as they age over the years. Here are a few hints that indicate excessive water pressure due to pressure regulator valve failure: unexplained small plumbing leaks under the sink; frequent toilet flush valve failures; leaks under the dishwasher, and yet another is outdoor garden hoses swelling in diameter.

To confirm that water pressure is excessive, buy a low-cost water pressure test gauge—available at any hardware/plumbing supply store (or Amazon.com) for about ten dollars. Then simply put the gauge (picture below on the right) on the washing machine cold water supply or the outdoor water spigot to get a house water pressure reading, which should be somewhere between 60 – 70 psi. If the pressure reading is excessive, it might be possible to adjust the pressure regulator valve to get it down. Carefully turn slightly in one direction and then go check the gauge reading to make sure the valve is being adjusted in the proper direction and the pressure is actually going down. If the excessive pressure can't be adjusted down, then the pressure regulator valve is probably bad. A replacement pressure regulator valve costs more or less \$100.

Do-it-Yourself plumbing repair is always VERY risky business, with potential for an uncontrollable water spill and damage to floors. There should be a main water supply cutoff valve handle just below the pressure regulator valve. That disconnects the house from the city's main water supply, at which point it may be possible to attempt replacing the pressure regulator valve without calling a plumber. However, it's probably best to call a plumber to do this very high-stakes repair job.

Local plumbers want anywhere from \$350 to \$450 to handle this job, which includes the price of the correct size replacement pressure regulator valve. Don't be upset by the fact that a plumber only needs about ten minutes to do the entire job; they've got the proper training, specialized experience and unique tools to do the job. Plus, they'll usually give you a one-year warrantee on the part and their work. Again, this high-stakes job is probably not where you want to "get your feet wet" in the wonderful world of plumbing.

