

'Summerizing' your Hotel's Irrigation and Sprinklers Systems

With summer right around the corner, it is important to do some basic checks now on your property's irrigation system so that you will be prepared to keep your hotel's landscaping both visually appealing and well hydrated over the coming months. High on your list of priorities should be practicing water conservation. This can best be achieved by maintaining a proper balance of water usage, chemicals and irrigation practices on your hotel's property. These practices, when coupled with proper sprinkler maintenance, will result in a greener and healthier looking property and, perhaps most important, happier guests that come back again and again.

Landscape irrigation accounts for a significant portion of any property's water usage. An irrigation system that is poorly maintained can lead to inefficiencies that result in correspondingly higher utility bills. Often inefficient systems produce large amounts of water usage that never even reaches its intended source. Excessive watering is



also often lost to watering below your plant's root zone and to evaporation and runoff. Proper maintenance of your property's irrigation systems is one of the most effective ways to reduce wasted water. Applying the correct amount of water to your property's landscape will not only reduce your utility bill and improve plant health, but it will also help reduce pollution and unsightly ponding from run-off and over-irrigation. It is important that your sprinkler system meet the demands of summer and provides an economical balance of water to ensure proper hydration. Conservation requires special care and maintenance to ensure that your property's lawn and landscaping stay healthy and well hydrated throughout the heat of summer.

You should check your property's irrigation system at least twice a year, once at the beginning of the season when you first fire it up and then again after a couple of month's operation. Ideally, one should check their property's systems on a monthly basis. Here are some tips to consider, but always consider checking with a professional to make sure your system is functioning as intended and efficiently. And, always consider safety first.



When you first start-up your sprinkler system consider the following steps:

- Turn the water on
- Make sure your system's controller is plugged-in and functioning
- Update the Day and Time
- Change the schedule to reflect the current season and irrigation needs
- Check the connection of all wires
- Check your system's timer and make sure it is working correctly
- Make sure your system's rain, wind, and soil moisture sensors are plugged-in and working
- Provide new battery back-up(s)
- Inspect all sprinkler heads
- Adjust or replace sprinkler heads as necessary to maximize efficiency
- Remove grass found around sprinkler heads to allow for optimal water coverage
- Turn each irrigation zone on and look for non-working zones or system damage
- Flag all problem areas and create a report for follow-up
- Perform a full system efficiency analysis and address noted areas of deficiency

As with any dormant system whether its a string of Christmas lights or a sprinkler system you never know if its going to work until you turn it on. In some cases, such as with your hotel property's irrigation and sprinkler system. It's not always the way you think you left it or it was when you last used it. Regardless of why or how it happened, it always pays to know a little about trouble shooting your system and when to call in a professional for additional input or expertise.

A Beginners Guide to Trouble Shooting a Sprinkler / Irrigation System

Water Pressure: A common problem is not getting enough or getting too much water pressure. This can happen for a variety of reasons, but usually it can be attributed to either your sprinkler system itself or the local water pressure in your area. Too much water pressure can result in over-watering of your property and it can also cause undo wear or damage to your nozzles and sprinkler heads. On the other hand, not enough water pressure can result in not enough water reaching the intended target area. Insufficient water for your grass can leave brown spots. Ideally, your property's spray heads should operate at 25 to 30 PSI, while rotor heads require more energy and operate at 30 to 50 PSI.

High pressure can also cause problems such as misting from spray heads or too rapid rotation. Installation of a pressure regulator or installing and regulating pressure heads can help eliminate high pressure problems.

Low pressure in a system can result in dry or brown spots in your grass indicating poor water coverage. Often if a sprinkler head fails to pop-up this can often be attributed to low water pressure. You can also reduce the pressure on a sprinkler head through pressure-reducing valves. The distance your sprinkler head is from the water source is directly related to its pressure. For long distances or low pressure areas, you can increase water pressure by several methods such as adding a booster pump, watering during off-peak times, or reducing the number of heads in a zone. When in doubt, it's best to check your sprinkler's manual for further instructions or contact your landscaping or plumbing contractor.

Leaks or Broken Pipes: Another factor that can affect your system's water pressure is a leak or break in your system's pipes. This can also bring water to undesirable areas in your property's landscape and cause unsightly over-watering and ponding on your sidewalks or trails. You can also often seal up small leaks by using a proper adhesive-taping. However, big breaks typically require you to replace entire pipe sections. Often the best thing you can do if you have a major leak is to consult a plumber. One trick that should only be used in extreme cases and with appropriate authorization when trouble shooting an underground leak and you can't determine or locate its source, is to cap off one end of the system. Then simply let the pressure build until it causes a more severe rupture that is more easily recognized and consequently fixed. Be careful trying this remedy as it could cause other problems you weren't expecting.

While some repairs or adjustments may seem easy others may require the help of a landscape professional. Many repairs such as adjusting the spray pattern of a sprinkler head or updating a nozzle are relatively simple and can be mastered easily by your staff. Irrigation maintenance is one of the most important factors in reducing water waste in the landscape and your property's utility bills. Additionally, a well-maintained and properly adjusted system makes for a healthy and beautiful landscape.

It is a great feeling to come to work and the first thing you see, the property grounds, puts a smile on your face and a sense of accomplishment. Be careful though when practicing proper landscaping or water management as they have been known to lead to other maladies such as excessive smiling, acts of kindness and even moments of prolonged lucidity and logic.



Asset Management Begins at the Property

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