CITY of DURANGO

Tips for Establishing a Systematic Maintenance Schedule for Inspecting and Testing an Automated Irrigation System.

1. Thoroughly inspect the irrigation system after activation in the spring and make sure it's operating properly.
2. Check, adjust and repair your irrigation equipment within 24 hours of mowing whenever possible.
3. Check the water supply and pressure. Differences in the sprinkler systems design operating pressure and actual water pressure can affect operation and efficiency.
4. Verify that the backflow prevention device is working correctly.
5. Inspect the valves to see if they operate without slamming open or closed in order to prevent damage from surges.
6. Verify that heads are properly adjusted - check the nozzle, arc, radius, level and attitude with respect to slope.
7. Look for debris (e.g., rocks, sand, dirt) lodged in sprinkler heads and drip emitters.
8. Identify leaks and repair them promptly. Signs of leakage include particularly green spots, soggy areas around spray heads and above ground hoses, jammed spray heads and torn hoses.
9. Repair or replace broken hardware and pipes with materials that match the originals. Test all repairs.
10. Shut off irrigation systems and adjust whenever irrigation water falls or runs onto hard surfaces such as sidewalks, streets or driveways.
11. Whenever possible, update and retrofit existing irrigation systems to take advantage of new water-saving technology (e.g., rain shut-off devices, drip irrigation).
12. Periodically verify that the plant material is healthy, has deep roots and adequate soil moisture.
13. Reset automatic controllers according the changing/seasonal needs of the plants. Irrigation systems should be rescheduled bi-monthly to correct run times.
14. As plants mature, add or relocate system components as needed to maintain uniform distribution of water. Ensure that system modifications do not exceed the system watering capacity.
15. Understand the capabilities of the irrigation system and use them properly. For example, for spray irrigation systems, program the irrigation controller for multiple start times on watering days to reduce runoff and deep percolation below the root zone. That is, if the total watering time is 24 minutes, set the controller to three cycles of 8 minutes each per cycle started each half-hour. (Drip systems should NOT be cycled in this manner.)
16. Whenever possible, incorporate the use of evapotranspiration (ET) data and modify it to your own plant and soil needs. Seasonally, the reference ET rate can be found under Current Events & News (How Much Should I Water?) on the **City's web site home page.** Calculate the run-time of each zone to supply the needed water based upon the actual precipitation rate of the

sprinkler zones, the water-holding properties of the soil, the changing weather conditions and the plant‘s water requirements.

17. Winterize sprinkler systems in our region by removing all the water from the irrigation system in order to prevent cracked pipes, broken heads and other problems.
18. If you hire a maintenance contractor, ensure that he/she is experienced and reputable.
19. If you have a very large property, consider having a certified landscape-irrigation audit done which would provide a thorough and comprehensive check of the efficiency of water application.
20. Identify your priorities during water-limited situations such as various stages of drought.

The irrigation system is a management tool and cannot replace sound judgment.

Source: Green Industries of Colorado's Best Management Practices for the Conservation and Protection of Water Resources in Colorado