



WATER CONSERVATION CLIMBING THE PRIORITY LADDER

By Bob Poole

Saving water is in the best interests of everyone. As the world's supply of 'blue gold' continues to diminish at an alarming rate, the pressure is on all facets of society to play its part in cutting back on the use of this precious resource.

A quick, easy and affordable solution for those who own or manage rental properties is to convert existing timer-controlled systems to climate controlled irrigation.

For many years, the City of Calgary has used 'smart' weather technology to reduce the mammoth cost of irrigating parks. In fact, Calgary has the largest municipal centrally controlled irrigation system in the world.

Now the same knowledge is available to anyone who has, or is about to install, irrigation.

'Smart' controllers have the ability to measure *exactly* the amount of moisture that has left the landscape, and has the further ability to replace *exactly* the moisture the landscape needs and when it needs it.

It is a technology and therefore no construction is involved in the installation. The new controllers are compatible with any existing timers.

"Smart" weather systems deliver best horticultural practices and forces deep root growth resulting in healthy and hardier landscapes.

The technology also prevents watering in the rain or if the temperature drops to near freezing.

A local company, ExactET Systems Inc., is Canada's leader in climate controlled irrigation.

Most businesses set their irrigation to come on three times a week during the summer months, whether the landscape needs it or not. This means they water 66 times (22 weeks X 3 times per week) in a single year.

ExactET's clients watered an average of 34 times in 2009 and cut water bills by an over-all average of 43 per cent.

The company has eight highly scientific weather stations in the Calgary area to accommodate the city's large number of micro-climates.

The system works with three components:

- A weather station that measures the climate – i.e. rain, solar heat, humidity, wind speed etc. – on an hourly basis
- That information is sent via a wireless message to a server which marries the data to the client's site specific needs
- Another wireless message is then sent to ExactET's 'smart' product, which is installed next to the existing controller.

In the vast majority of cases where people have converted to climate controlled irrigation, savings far outweigh the initial cost of these upgrades, and return on investment is typically two years or less. In fact, large condominium complexes usually get the money back in just one summer.

'Smart' controllers have many other benefits, including:

- reduced operating costs and landscape maintenance
- improved curb appeal and therefore higher property values
- reduced fertilization/herbicide requirements
- elimination of water run-off pollution into our rivers
- reduced carbon footprint
- reduced costly asphalt repairs as a result of excess run-off
- reduced liability by preventing watering during cold or rainy weather
- public recognition and respect for going 'Green'
- assistance in earning points towards LEED certification
- reduced over-watering, the biggest killer of trees
- extra exemptions from water restrictions during periods of drought

The bottom line is that the best way to achieve healthier landscapes at an affordable price is to use climate controlled irrigation to deliver the right amount of water exactly when and where it is needed.

People who follow that rule put money in their pockets rather than see it pouring down the drain.

Bob Poole is vice president of marketing and media of ExactET Systems Inc. He can be reached at: (403) 888-2467 or e-mail: bpoole@exactet.ca