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Filer:	Raquel Kravitz
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Save Gallons of Water by Simply Upgrading Your Regulator

As we all know the need to save water is essential and is going to become even more crucial in the future. Some residents, associations, or company's may not be able to upgrade to a new and possibly expensive watering system, so they automatically think there is nothing they can do to cut back. However, if they have a direct acting regulator controlling their system they can. All they have to do is upgrade to an automatic control valve (ACV). Yes, ACVs are more expensive than a direct acting regulator, but overtime the water saved from using an ACV will quickly outweigh the cost.

In many areas the water agencies are mandating set watering times in order to minimize water usage. For example, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power is mandating that no watering can occur between the hours of 9am-6pm. For some homeowner associations and cities this mandate is an issue, because they have too many clocks and now not enough watering time. So, I've started to work with several associations and cities to demonstrate how an ACV can help them adjust to these new regulations.

At least 90% of these areas use direct acting regulators, so they are able to water one, possibly two clocks at a time. When I show them how many clocks can run with an ACV they are stunned. I worked with a city that had 7 clocks; running one at a time off of a direct acting regulator. They now have an ACV and they run 5 clocks at one time. It cut their watering cycle in half.

Most direct acting regulators are also buried underground, which allows it to be susceptible to constant damage from dirt and gravel. It can be extremely time consuming for the maintenance personnel to fix these valves. Unfortunately, this causes owners to abandon them or continue to allow them to run even if their full of dirt or damaged. An automatic control valve is always installed above ground, which is ideal for maintenance and longevity of the valve.

The biggest issue with direct acting regulators is their pressure is constantly fluctuating as the pressure coming in changes. Therefore, you have to set it at 90PSI in order to regulate down to 70PSI, because of the pressure fluctuations. Your system will never have a steady pressure to rely on, and having to set the device so much higher causes an enormous amount of water loss. A big misconception that I have seen over the past few years is most people believe that you need a high PSI in order to water properly. With a direct acting regulator that can be true. However, with an ACV, that is normally not the case. If your sprinklers are misting then they are set way too high. An ACV will constantly stay at your set pressure. So, if you want 70PSI, you set it for 70PSI, and that's what you get. With this constant pressure you no longer have to set your device so high to keep up with the pressure fluctuation. Therefore, allowing you to play with your system to get the accurate amount of pressure needed. I have worked on several systems where the operator has wanted it at 70PSI, but with an ACV it was watering the same amount as the direct acting regulator, but with only 35 or 40PSI.

Therefore, if you are able to upgrade from a direct acting regulator to an ACV you will potentially be able to cut your watering cycle in half and lessen your PSI substantially. This will conserve a large amount of water for your area and after a period of time you should see a significant change in your water bill.

-Bernard Clarke