

Amendment to Florida Irrigation Code

The Florida State Senate has revised the requirements for automatic landscape irrigation systems. The new law also creates penalties for any person who operates an automatic landscape irrigation system as well as licensed contractors who do not comply with the requirements.

Under Title XXVIII, Chapter 373.62, irrigation systems must have technology that will inhibit or interrupt the automatic landscape irrigation system when adequate moisture is present.

The Legislature recognizes that lawn and landscape irrigation systems use a substantial amount of the state's potable water. The Legislature finds that smart irrigation systems that use soil moisture sensors with remote monitoring and adjustment capabilities, if properly installed and monitored, provide more efficient irrigation and save substantially more water than conventional time-controlled irrigation systems. This is because smart irrigation systems apply water to lawns and plants only as necessary to maintain required soil moisture, thus minimizing the overwatering or unnecessary watering that occurs with conventional irrigation systems.

However, in order for this technology to optimize the efficient application of water it cannot be subject to day or days-of-the-week watering restrictions. The Legislature, therefore, recognizes that enacting a statewide process to provide an exemption from local water restriction ordinances will accelerate the adoption of this water saving technology.

Further, a uniform exemption process will streamline variance procedures and minimize delay in implementing such technology. The longer it takes to approve soil moisture sensor control systems, the more potable water is wasted. A uniform variance process will allow state residents to maintain their property and protect water resources while enjoying their landscapes.

Licensed contractors must ensure that such devices or switches are installed and working properly on every automatic landscape irrigation system upon which they work. If such devices or switches are not installed or are not operating properly, the licensed contractor must repair or install new devices or switches and confirm they are operating properly before completing any other service on the system.

Licensed contractors who do not comply with this law will face fines. A minimum penalty must be \$50 for a first offense, \$100 for a second offense, and \$250 for a third or subsequent offense.