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Brainy watering system benefits Perris

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The Press-Enterprise

Video: Perris saves water with sprinkler system

Keeping a lawn free of brown spots doesn't have to involve tons of watering. That's the lesson the city of Perris hopes to relay to its residents with its new water-saving irrigation system.

More than a dozen workers from the Toro Company began volunteering on Tuesday through today to replace the old sprinkler system that serviced City Hall's lawns and flower beds with cutting-edge irrigation technology that emerged about a year ago. The equipment is expected to cut the watering of city landscaping by at least 30 percent, saving an estimated 600,000 gallons a year, said Toro's Mike Baron.

Assistant City Manager Ron Carr said that besides slashing the city's water bill, the project also demonstrates one more way to conserve water during these drought times.

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Frank Bellino / The Press-Enterprise
Bill Bannard of the Toro Company installs a new sprinkler head at Perris City Hall on Tuesday.

"In this region one of the biggest, if not the biggest issue right now, is water conservation and responsible use of water," Carr said.

The new irrigation gadgets installed this week included water-efficient spray heads and rotors, "precision spray" nozzles and a "smart controller" that uses wireless weather signals to daily calculate how much watering the plants need.

"The uniqueness is the spray nozzles put down water more slowly and evenly than conventional spray nozzles," said Baron, who monitored and helped workers digging and testing equipment around City Hall on Tuesday. "They minimize misting and have an anti-geyser device so should a nozzle get damaged, you won't get a water geyser 10 to 20 feet in the air."

Toro, a Minnesota-based company with its irrigation division in Riverside, decided that instead of hosting another water symposium, it would spend the same amount, about $3,000, to donate water-efficient technology to an area city.

Baron said the company chose Perris because of the city's commitment to green technology as evidenced by the solar panels that power several civic buildings. The solar project won the Helen Putnam Award from the League of California Cities last year.

The city demonstration project gives Toro a platform to showcase its products to a wider audience. Typically, Toro markets its equipment to wholesale distributors, Baron said.

And while a new $3,000 sprinkler system may be out of financial reach for many residents, even smaller, cheaper upgrades such as replacing older nozzles with more efficient spray nozzles -- about $4 each -- can substantially cut water usage, said Pete Strand, an engineering specialist for Toro.

Carr said the city plans to herald the new watering system by putting up signs at City Hall, using its Web site, distributing pamphlets and conducting tours.

"When times get tough like this, cities really have two options -- they can either pull back and wait for times to get better, or they can get creative and keep projects moving forward," Carr said. "One way to get creative is to form partnerships with private enterprise firms."

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