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AUSTIN

One-day-a-week watering policy is not for everyone

Federal, state and university properties are not affected, though many trying to conserve.

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When Austin's new restrictions on landscape watering take effect today, some sprinklers may continue.

So don't be surprised if you see sprinklers running on non-watering days, especially at federal, state and University of Texas properties, which are not covered by the city ordinance.

At the Capitol and the Texas State Cemetery, sprinklers may be seen running on more than one day a week, state officials said.

"Of course we're going to comply ... but we have 200 watering zones, and there's no way we can do (watering) in one day," said Julie Fields, spokeswoman for the State Preservation Board, which maintains the historic statehouse and its sprawling grounds. "We'll spread (watering) out over a two-day period."

Fields said state officials were submitting a plan to city officials.

Harry Bradley, superintendent of the State Cemetery, said the site has cut back on its watering in the interest of conservation, but it probably will be watering on more than one day each week under a plan approved by Austin officials several years ago.

"We're four blocks long and two blocks (wide) the other way ... and can't water all that in one day. It's a very large area," he said. "We're also a little bit different in another way: Our system is 80 percent automated, but some areas we have to turn on and off by hand.

"If we had to water all those areas in one day, we'd have to do it on overtime — and we can't do that."

The University of Texas, as an arm of the state, is not required to comply with local watering rules but has reduced sprinkling in recent months and will cut back more beginning this week, said Laurie Lentz, a spokeswoman for the university.

"We're making efforts to comply with the city's rules, but we're not following them to the letter," Lentz said. "The university is a state resource, and we try to maintain that resource for the state."

Much of the campus will be watered once a week, generally Tuesdays, in compliance with Austin's ordinance. But there are several exceptions.

High-traffic zones such as the South Mall and the fountain area near the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs will also be irrigated on Fridays as needed, especially during football season.

Athletic fields will get twice-a-week dousings instead of five or six, and recreational fields will be watered once a week, although that could be increased for safety reasons if they dry up and harden too much, Lentz said. Large trees, collectively valued at \$27 million, will continue to get drip irrigation on a rotating basis.

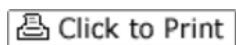
Even the artificial turf at Royal-Memorial Stadium requires periodic watering, to maintain stability and to cool it before games, Lentz said. But that amounts to 80 percent less water than what the previous turf, made of real grass, needed.

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