

water sense



WATER MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS
FALL 2011

Olympia, WA Changes to a Water Management System That Works

Olympia, the Capital City of Washington state and named in honor of the majestic Olympic mountains to the north, boasts of mild winters and pleasantly warm summers which make the area an ideal place for outdoor recreation. The Parks department manages 40 city parks totaling 963 acres and as good environmental stewards implemented a new water and resource management system for controlling irrigation.

The installation of the Calsense ET2000e irrigation controller system started in 2010, utilizing local radio as the communication mode between computer and field units. Weather sensors; tipping rain buckets and on-site ET gauges were installed to monitor local weather and to automatically apply water efficiently. Local radio was selected due to cost effectiveness and reliability. In the past a competitive system installed utilized LAN lines and cell phones, and with it monthly bills. After the one time license fee, renewable every ten years, the local radio offers reliable communication without the monthly budgetary expense.

Changing course and implementing a new system brings with it unfamiliarity and concern, but what has been much appreciated is the outstanding customer service and technical support provided directly by Calsense employees. Available to help at the drop of a hat, whether by phone or directly out at a



Percival Landing, City of Olympia, WA

site, there are never any additional fees. The prior manufacturer required a credit card number just to answer a question over the phone. Everyone just likes free better.

The Calsense software, loaded on a computer at the maintenance facility is convenient and easy to use. The daily Alert data has proven to be a real time saver. In the past the routine was to make the rounds park to park and completely go through each irrigation system making sure everything operated correctly. Line breaks could go undetected for days or weeks, or worse yet is when a public citizen reports a lake forming in a park. Now with daily Alerts it is possible to know if there is a problem before walking out of the shop, even if it is as small as a broken head! Setting the right parameters in the program, the Calsense controller will shut off a station with a break, skipping over that one zone while irrigating the rest. In the event of a mainline break, the controller closes the master valves and the entire system is automatically shut off.

Another highlight is the ability to set up access control. Often times in the past clocks would be turned off by accident and one would never know until the grass turned

brown or plant material was lost. Access control allows one to limit others as to what functions they can access on the controller and locks them out of functions they don't really need. It's a great labor management tool.

As with any city, Olympia has a variety of weather patterns in different areas. The installation of ET gauges and rain buckets at four specific sites, allows for tighter control and increased accuracy of the water applied to city parks. As water regulations become more restrictive in sensitive areas and in the future, the city of Olympia now has the tools to manage water more efficiently. In 2010, when Calsense was installed at only three parks, a savings of \$16,936 dollars was achieved; that was 2,427,752 gallons of water. These savings nearly covered the cost of the equipment in one season!

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