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Turn back the clock on water waste

California American Water encourages customers to turn off their sprinklers when they turn back clocks

Pacific Grove, CA (October 30, 2009) – Daylight savings time ends in the United States on Sunday, November 1 when clocks are set back one hour at 2:00 a.m. local daylight time, which becomes 1:00 a.m. local standard time. With the rainy season just getting underway, California American Water is launching a public awareness campaign to remind local residents to turn their sprinklers off – a simple step that can be done when you turn the clock back – to protect the environment while saving water and money during the winter months.

Irrigation experts encourage outdoor water users to reduce their irrigation run times and frequencies during the fall and early winter.

“Many of us continue to irrigate more than we need in September, October and November,” said California American Water spokeswoman, Catherine Bowie. “When compared to the peak water needs of June and July, outdoor water use in November should be reduced by 60 to 75 percent. Shorter days mean less sun - and your plants need less water.”

According to Bowie, water company employees spot residents and businesses with their sprinklers running while it’s raining every year. “Not only do we see it happening, we see bills with hundreds or even thousands of gallons of daily water use, and when folks are using that much water in November or January, there’s only one likely explanation,” she said. “Sprinklers running in the winter account for a tremendous amount of water waste.”

Turning sprinklers off also saves money. On the Monterey Peninsula, high water users pay more per unit of water than low users, as part of California American Water’s state-enforced mandate to reduce water use from the Carmel River. During the winter months,

customers receive a smaller allowance for water consumption and can therefore be driven quickly into a high price range if outdoor watering continues.

“We want our customers to know they can avoid high water bills by controlling their outdoor use,” Bowie said. “It’s good for their pocketbooks and good for the environment.”

In fact, it’s also good for home landscaping. Too much water can be more damaging to plants than drought. Landscaping experts estimate that 90 percent of plants killed die from over-watering. Soggy soil can prevent nutrients and air from reaching plant roots, inviting unwanted diseases such as root rot.

If there is a long break between rains, California American Water recommends manually watering landscape with a hose and a low-flow hose nozzle. One way to test if soil needs watering is by pushing a screwdriver into the ground. If it goes in easily, the soil is moist and doesn't need water.

With an average use of 70 gallons per person per day, residents on the Monterey Peninsula are among the most water wise in the country. “Our customers do an extraordinary job every day,” concluded Bowie. “But there’s always a few of us that just need that extra reminder. Making it a habit to turn sprinklers off when we fall back one hour hopefully makes it a little easier for all of us.”

California American Water offers free Water Wise House Calls to all residential and multi-residential customers, as well as low-flow hose nozzles and other water-saving devices. For more information, contact the California American conservation office at (831) 646-3205.

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