



SAWS Annual Irrigation Checkup – FAQs

irrigationcheckup@saws.org

210-233-3443

1. What is the SAWS Annual Irrigation Checkup requirement?

In an effort to maximize year-round water conservation efforts, the San Antonio City Council passed a water conservation ordinance in 2006 requiring properties 5 acres or larger that have an in-ground irrigation system and/or properties that used over 1 million gallons of water for irrigation in the prior calendar year to complete an annual irrigation checkup by **May 1** of each year. The annual checkup is an inspection of the irrigation system that ensures the system is operating without water waste (including functioning rain sensors) and the calculation of peak season estimated monthly total consumption in gallons.

2. Is there a penalty for non-compliance with the requirement?

Failure to comply with the annual irrigation checkup requirement by May 1 will result in the assessment of the following additional charges on the account associated with the irrigation system;

- (a) Annual enforcement fee in the amount of \$155. This fee shall be assessed on an annual basis until the requirements of Section 34-273(3) have been met; and
- (b) Additional volumetric rate of \$0.8463 per one thousand (1000) gallons on all irrigation consumption on a monthly basis; this additional rate shall continue to be assessed until the requirements of subsection 34-273(3) have been met.

These charges will be assessed on all accounts associated with the irrigation system. Any accounts associated with irrigation not documented on the Online Irrigation Checkup Form will be assessed the additional charges until the Online Irrigation Checkup Form has successfully been submitted to SAWS Conservation that includes the accounts associated with the irrigation system.

3. Are all properties with in-ground irrigation required to submit the annual checkup to SAWS Conservation?

No. There are two criteria that trigger the requirement. The first criteria is properties with over 1 million gallons of water billed as irrigation in the previous year (Large Use) and the second is any property larger than five acres that has irrigation anywhere on the property (Large Property). This includes noncontiguous parcels such as medians and islands maintained by homeowner associations. These criteria are described in the city ordinance in Chapter 34, Section 273 (3).



4. If my property has an irrigated area that is smaller than 5 acres, is the property still considered a Large Property?

Yes, the Large Property requirement is for properties with an aggregate *lot* size that equals 5 acres or greater, regardless of the size of the irrigation system.

5. My property is an HOA with several irrigation meters that serve all of the common areas and medians throughout the property. The property itself is larger than 5 acres but each of these common areas are individually less than an acre each. Are all of these systems required to have an annual checkup?

Yes, the Large Property requirement definition states *“land managed as a group such as commonly found in neighborhood common areas or medians ... regardless of the number of meters or individual parcel sizes associated with the property that equals or exceeds five acres in size and has an irrigation system covering all or a portion of the property.”*

6. The annual irrigation checkup does not apply to my property. What action can I take to not be charged the non-compliant penalty?

If your property receives a courtesy notification letter from SAWS, the property has an active irrigation account that is billed monthly for irrigation. A site inspection to verify there is no irrigation system present or has been permanently disabled will be required to exempt the irrigation meter from the checkup requirement. The deadline for compliance and avoiding the rate and fee will not be extended if the confirmation of a permanently disabled system is not completed by May 1. We recommend allowing three weeks to schedule your inspection with SAWS Conservation.

7. The irrigation system at my property is not in use and is not functional. Does the annual checkup still apply to my property?

Yes. A system that is not in use must complete a system inspection and undergo repairs to comply with the annual checkup requirement by May 1, or the system must be permanently disabled to be cleared from the irrigation checkup requirement. A site inspection will be required to complete the compliance process. The deadline for compliance and avoiding the failure to comply rate and fee will not be extended if the confirmation of a permanently disabled system is not completed by May 1. We recommend allowing three weeks to schedule your inspection with SAWS Conservation. SAWS Conservation may offer a rebate for permanently disabling the irrigation system.



8. Can I complete the Irrigation System Analysis Form at any time?

The system evaluation with the Irrigation System Analysis Form can be completed at any time after January 1 of the calendar year. The Online Irrigation Checkup Form must be submitted by May 1. Beginning May 2, the property will be considered non-compliant. Non-compliance charges will be assessed monthly until compliance is met.

9. Is a licensed irrigator required to complete the annual irrigation checkup for my property if the irrigation system used less than 1 million gallons last year?

No. A TCEQ licensed irrigator (LI) is only required to perform the system inspection and submit the Online Irrigation Checkup Form if the property meets the “Large Use” definition (more than 1 million gallons used for irrigation purposes in the previous calendar year). A checkup report submitted by a TCEQ licensed irrigation technician (IT) will not be approved for Large Use properties.

10. Do I have to use the Irrigation System Analysis form while evaluating the irrigation system on the property?

Yes, the SAWS Irrigation System Analysis Form is required, as it has been designed to collect all information critical to evaluating the system. This includes the system’s number of controllers and zones, the zone type, and zone peak season run times, as well as indicating the required compliance action taken for any critical maintenance issue found. In addition, the form requires the calculation of the system’s peak season estimated monthly gallons.

11. What is the importance of the different critical maintenance issues identified on the Irrigation System Analysis Form?

The following critical maintenance issues are all defined as water waste by the city ordinance and will result in a water waste citation if observed by a SAWS patrol officer at any time:

1. Main line and lateral line leaks
2. Stuck valves and valve leaks
3. Broken heads
4. Overspray, misaligned heads
5. High pressure
6. Excessive runoff



7. Non-functioning rain sensor

12. What necessary compliance action can be taken for all critical maintenance issues identified during the system inspection?

All critical maintenance issues identified during the checkup inspection must be addressed by one of the following approved compliance actions below for the property to meet compliance. Turning off individual zone(s) or the entire system is **not** an approved compliance action.

- (a) Repairs Made
- (b) Individual Zone(s) Permanently Disabled
- (c) Entire System Permanently Disabled

Note: SAWS Conservation offers a rebate for the permanent disabling of individual zone(s) or the entire irrigation system. The irrigation system must be inspected **prior** to removal to qualify for the rebate.

13. Can you please clarify the Peak Month Estimated Gallons requirement on the Irrigation System Analysis Form?

This number represents how many gallons your system will use in a peak month, typically during the summer. You will choose a representative zone for each of your system's zone types (spray, rotor, multi-stream rotor, drip, or bubbler) to calculate this number. Select a zone that best represents the average size and performance for all zones of that type within the system.

Provide the following information for each representative zone: The zone's number on the controller, the flow rate for the zone (gallons per minute) and the total weekly run time for the representative zone. If you water more than once a week, you will need to add up the run time minutes to get the total weekly run time. You will also include how many zones of this zone type there are in the system.

The watering schedule must be in compliance with the current drought stage watering rules at the time the checkup is completed.

How to Calculate the Peak Month Estimated Gallons

1. For a representative zone type, multiply the gallons per minute by the total weekly run time to get the total gallons. Then multiply the total gallons by the number of these zones to get the total gallons per week for that zone type.
2. Do this for each representative zone type.



3. Add the total weekly gallons for all zone types to calculate the Peak Month Estimated Total Gallons Per Week for the system.
4. Multiply the weekly estimate by 4.3 to calculate the Peak Month Estimated Total Gallons per Month for the system.

****For systems with more than one controller, Peak Month Estimated Total Gallons per Month must be calculated for each controller for the system.***

An example is below for the following scenario: System A, Controller 1 has 12 spray zones, 6 rotor zones and 3 drip zones.

Representative Zone	Zone #	GPM	Total Weekly Run Time	Total Gallons	# Zones	Total Weekly Gallons/Zone Type
Spray	1	20	30	600	12	7,200
Rotor	4	30	45	1,350	6	8,100
MP-Multi-Stream Rotor						
Drip	3	8	60	480	3	1,440
Bubbler						
Peak Month Estimated Total Gallons/Week						16,740 gallons
Peak Month Estimated Total Gallons/Month						72,000 gallons

14. What if I'm not able to calculate the flow rate for a representative zone using the meter method?

Irrigation systems that are fed off a shared meter or a looped meter system may require the flow rate be calculated using the manufacturer specifications for flow rate based on head pressure. Calculate the flow rate based on a pressure reading at an individual nozzle in the zone, then add all the nozzle heads in the zone to determine the flow rate for spray and rotor zones. Use the pressure readings from the spray or rotor zone for drip and bubbler zones.*

****Please reference the Calculating GPM's worksheet for additional information***



15. Why is SAWS now requiring the Online Irrigation Checkup Form to be submitted for a property to meet compliance with this requirement?

The goal of the Online Irrigation Checkup Form is to offer a standardized and streamlined submittal process for the property's Responsible Party and the licensed irrigator completing the checkup. The Online Irrigation Checkup Form ensures SAWS Conservation has collected all necessary information for the property. The online submittal also ensures the Responsible Party or licensed irrigator has acknowledged the irrigation system meets all compliance requirements and provides an Irrigation Checkup Compliance Report for documentation of compliance. SAWS staff will review data and the compliance status may be changed to noncompliant if the data in the fields is not valid or incomplete. A new submittal of the Online Irrigation Checkup Form will be required.

16. Login to the Online Irrigation Checkup Form requires the irrigation account's meter # and service address zip code? Where can I locate this information?

The SAWS irrigation account number(s), meter number and service address zip code for the property is identified on all courtesy notification letters that are mailed to the BILLING ADDRESS that SAWS has on file for the irrigation account. In addition, the meter # and checkup key can be provided by Conservation staff by email request. Please email your request to irrigationcheckup@saws.org.

17. How can I verify if my irrigation meter(s) is required to comply in the current year?

Once the portal opens on March 1st, you can login and confirm the checkup status for the current year. The checkup status will indicate one of the following: Checkup Required; Awaiting Submission; Not Required This Year; or Exempt.

For a complete list of required commercial irrigation meters for the current year, please submit an open records request through the portal on the SAWS website : www.saws.org/openrecords

Using the portal allows you to track the status of the request and to easily login and submit future requests.