



SAWS Annual Irrigation Checkup -- FAQs

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, 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 \$160.27. 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 \$0.2056 per one hundred (100) 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. Properties with over 1 million gallons of water billed as irrigation in the previous year (Large Use). The second trigger 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 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 is required to complete the annual checkup.”*

- 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 complete the compliance process. 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. A 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.

- 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 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). Pr



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

Yes, the 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?

Choose one zone for each of the system’s zone types (spray, rotor, multi-stream rotor, drip, or bubbler) that best represent the average size and performance for all zones of that type within the system. Provide the following information: The zone’s number, the flow rate for the zone (gpm) and the peak season weekly run time for the representative zone. Calculate the weekly total gallons for the representative zone by multiplying the zone’s gpm by total weekly run time. Calculate the combined estimated total gallons for that zone type by multiplying the total gallons by the number of zones of that type. Do this for all zone types. Add the total weekly gallons for all zone types to calculate the Peak Month Estimated Total Gallons per Week for the system. 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 be in compliance with the annual 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 checkup key? Where can I locate this information?

The SAWS irrigation account number(s), meter number and checkup key 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. The Online Irrigation Checkup Form does not require a copy of the Irrigation System Analysis Form for my property. Why not?

Submittal of the Online Irrigation Checkup Form requires key information from the Irrigation System Analysis Form. The person submitting the Online Irrigation Checkup Form is required to acknowledge the SAWS Irrigation System Analysis Form has been completed for all automatic controllers that operate irrigation zones for the property as well as that all SAWS Irrigation System Analysis Forms completed for this property meet all requirements of the city ordinance and include all required information listed on the SAWS website. **However, SAWS may request a copy of the form at any time and compliance with the checkup will be contingent on this information being provided.** Some of the reasons an audit of the paperwork may be required include: Water waste citation issued for the property; the property applies for rebate or variance; first time submittal by this property; or submitting the form after May 1 deadline.

18. My courtesy notification letter from SAWS indicates the property is a Top User and is required to provide copies of the Irrigation System Analysis Forms in addition to completing the Online Irrigation Checkup Form to complete the compliance process. Why?

Properties with irrigation consumption over 2.5 million gallons in the previous calendar year require the licensed irrigator that completed the onsite inspection and the Online Irrigation Checkup Form to



provide SAWS with copies of the Irrigation System Analysis Form by May 1. These properties represent SAWS' largest outdoor water users and the paperwork ensures the licensed irrigator has collected all information critical to evaluating the system during the onsite inspection. The Irrigation System Analysis Form requires documentation of the irrigation schedule, identification and action taken for maintenance issues, and calculation of the peak season estimated monthly total consumption based on representative zone GPM's and total run times provided by the irrigator. SAWS Conservation reviews this information to ensure correct information is provided and to better understand the scope of the irrigation system for our premier outdoor water users.