

LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

[Administrative Code - Water Efficient Irrigation]

Ordinance amending the Administrative Code by revising the applicability threshold to 500 square feet for requirements for the development and maintenance of landscape irrigation controls for specified new construction landscapes and landscape rehabilitation projects.

Existing Law

Chapter 63 of the San Francisco Administrative Code was first enacted in 1991 to ensure compliance with provisions of the California Government Code requiring local agencies to adopt and implement landscape water conservation measures. The purpose of this chapter was to promote efficient water use in new and renovated landscapes by utilizing proper landscape design, management and efficient irrigation equipment and techniques through mandatory requirements for landscapes in new developments and landscape renovations.

Amendments to Current Law

The ordinance requires that landscape projects be installed, constructed, operated, and maintained in accordance with regulations adopted by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) that establish limits on outdoor water consumption. A "Maximum Applied Water Allowance," or water budget, must be established for each landscape project and provides the project applicant with the appropriate amount of water that may be used to irrigate its landscape area.

Applicability: The amended requirements apply to all public agency, commercial, and residential new construction landscapes and landscape rehabilitation projects with a landscape area equal to or greater than 500 square feet.

Tiered Compliance: The ordinance applies different compliance mechanisms based on the square footage of the new construction or landscape rehabilitated area.

Tier 1

Landscape rehabilitation projects with the following attributes are considered Tier 1 projects and are eligible for a simple checklist and self certification compliance.

- Landscape area of 1,000 to 2,500 square feet;
- Turf not exceeding 25% of total landscape area;
- 75% of landscape area consists of low water use or climate appropriate plantings.

The Tier 1 project checklist describes the landscape project, documents the selection of low water use or climate appropriate plants, and confirms the use of water efficient irrigation components and other relevant landscape and irrigation information.

Tier 2

New construction landscapes and landscape rehabilitation projects with the following attributes are considered Tier 2 projects and must submit a landscape documentation package for plan review.

- New construction landscape project with 500 square feet or more of landscape area;
- Landscape rehabilitation project with 2,500 square feet or more of landscape area;
- Tier 1 projects exceeding 25% turf requirement;
- Tier 1 projects with less than 75% low water or climate appropriate plantings.

The Tier 2 landscape documentation package mirrors state regulation and includes a planting and irrigation plan, soil analysis, grading plan, and an updated worksheet for calculating the project's estimated annual water use and water budget.

Background Information

In 2006, Assembly Bill 1881, the Water Conservation in Landscaping Act, was passed into law requiring that local water agencies adopt a water efficient landscape program that meets water conservation standards adopted by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) in 2009. In 2010, Chapter 63 was modified to comply with the requirements of the new model ordinance while addressing San Francisco's smaller lot and landscape sizes. New and rehabilitated landscape projects with over 1,000 square feet of landscape area are required to submit planting and irrigation plans, soil analysis reports, and water budget calculations for City approval prior to issuance of an application for water service.

After four consecutive years of drought in California, on April 1, 2015, Governor Brown issued a Drought Executive Order (EO B-29-15) that directed the DWR to update the state's model ordinance to increase water efficiency standards for new and existing landscapes. The California Water Commission approved the amendments to the model ordinance on July 15, 2015 and local agencies must update their local ordinance to be at least as effective as the state's new model ordinance.

After review of DWR's new efficiency standards and revised model ordinance (California Code of Regulations Title 23, Chapter 2.7, Sections 490-495), SFPUC staff concluded that modifications to San Francisco's Administrative Code Chapter 63 were necessary to ensure compliance with the state's new landscape requirements. The proposed amendments to the ordinance will ensure such compliance. In addition, rules and regulations regarding water efficient irrigation were adopted by the SFPUC to help ensure compliance with the new ordinance among its water service customers.

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