

PIPELINE

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FLORIDA IRRIGATION SOCIETY

*Lighting the
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2021*





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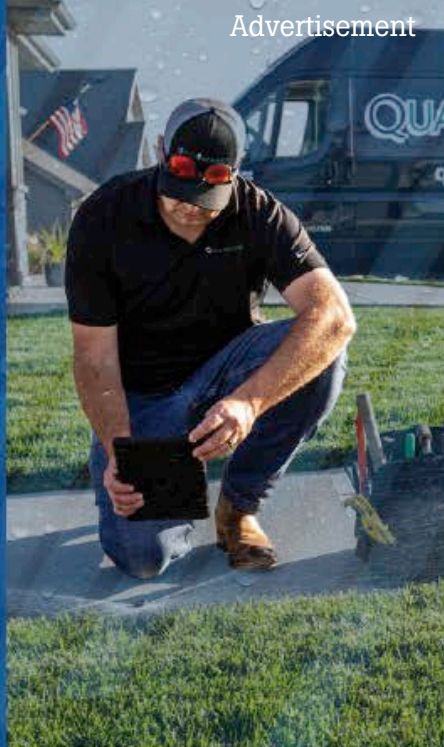
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FEATURES DESIGNED FOR CONTRACTORS



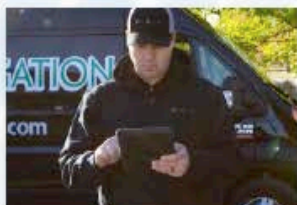
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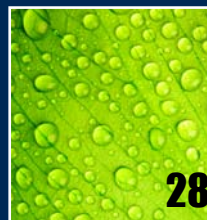


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Winner of the holiday lighting contest is Cutting Edge Industries



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FIS Members and Pipeline Readers,

I think we are all ready to say goodbye to 2020 and ready to welcome in the new year! Reflecting back on 2020, it has been a good year for the Florida Irrigation Society (FIS), irrigation contractors, distributors, manufacturers and employees in Florida. Luckily, we had the backing of our governor and local governments to keep irrigation on the essential list unlike states like California and New York.

What 2021 brings is still a bit hazy when looking at our "crystal ball". However, you should already be in the planning stage to take advantage of any carryover momentum and lesson learned, and new opportunities forced on us by the pandemic.

On behalf of FIS, I want to thank you for your support in 2020. We appreciate your confidence in this year's leadership team by re-electing us to serve as your officers in 2021. I, **Tom Allen, Randy Heimsoth, Matt Shreves, Steven Jenkins, and Larry Lentz**, Immediate Past President, along with the other Board members will be working together to increase FIS' voice and influence in the industry through increased membership, enhanced member benefits, state-of-the-art education programming and technical training, and updated communication tools. We will look to you, our members, for input into your needs for 2021 and how FIS can help you in other ways. Email, call, or text us. We are here to ensure the best future possible for professional irrigators and the industry as a whole.

As the year closes, I want to wish you all a Happy and Prosperous New Year and to encourage you to renew your membership in FIS for 2021. If not a member yet, please join us. The investment is reasonable but the benefits are invaluable and will last a lifetime. ■

Tom Allen



Tom Allen
FIS President

The Florida Irrigation Society extends a warm welcome to its newest members* -

Robert Mainguy, Mainguy Landscape Services

Phoenix McKinney, Pasco County Utilities

Kimberly Ninehouse, SiteOne Landscape Supply

Jason O'Brien, Jay's Landscape LLC

Alejandro Rotundo, Cayco Landscaping

David Straight, Weathermatic



***August 14 - December 21, 2020**

Want to join the Florida Irrigation Society?

Visit www.fisstate.org and download the membership form.

Once complete, email to info@fisstate.org or

fax to 727-578-9982.



NAVIGATING OSHA SAFETY REQUIREMENTS DURING A PANDEMIC



BENJAMIN LUTE, ESQ.
COTNEY CONSTRUCTION LAW

2020 — a year that will live in infamy — likely will be remembered as the year of COVID-19. Unfortunately, as it stands today, it appears we are not quite out of the woods just yet. Over the last 8 plus months, we have seen widespread panic, the complete shutdown of whole industries and entire states, the closing of businesses, the re-opening of businesses, and again the re-closing of various industries and individual businesses alike. We have also seen heightened safety restrictions and increased governmental regulation from the federal government, as well as on a local state and municipality/county level. As it relates to irrigation contractors and their business, one of the more important bodies of ever evolving law to keep tabs on is OSHA rules and regulations, which is the subject of this writing.

Though OSHA has established and disseminated various “guidance” on how employers should deal with COVID-19 in the workplace, such guidance technically is not a legal rule, standard, or regulation. In other words, OSHA’s “guidance” is not intended to create new legal obligations and is purported by OSHA only to be a recommendation. Notwithstanding, employers should keep in mind that even though OSHA guidance is not a requirement in and of itself, evidence of good faith compliance (such as incorporating guidance into a company’s written safety plan and good recordkeeping showing adherence) is invaluable in the event something does inevitably go awry.

OSHA’s General Duty Clause

As discussed above, OSHA’s approach to protecting workers from the dangers of COVID-19 has thus far, for the most part, been through the implementation of “guidance” documents, as opposed to new federal

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law. That being said, even though OSHA regulations aren't necessarily tailored to address viral infections or the spread of same in the workplace, OSHA's general duty clause theoretically could, and very likely would, be utilized to pursue situations in which employees appear to have been exposed to COVID-19 while on the job. The general duty clause provides that all employers shall provide a work environment "free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm." In essence, an employer is responsible for instructing employees in recognition and avoidance of unsafe conditions and the regulations applicable to his or her work environment to control or eliminate hazards or other exposure to illness or injury. This could include sanitation facilities, access to hand soap and cleansing agents, protection of potable water, air quality, and as discussed below, other less obvious "hazards" such as heat-related hazards. This is a catch-all provision OSHA is known for using when hazard-specific standards are not applicable in a certain situation.

COVID-Specific Guidance

Regarding limiting exposure to and the spread of the coronavirus itself, OSHA has released advisory recommendations to assist employers in providing a safe and healthful workplace. OSHA classifies work tasks into four exposure levels: lower, medium, high, and very high. Lower exposure risk levels occur where work tasks allow employees to be socially distanced with little contact with the general public. Medium risk environments include tasks which require workers to be within 6 feet of one another and those which require workers to be within six feet of members of the public. High exposure risk environments include indoor work sites occupied by people suspected of having or known to have had COVID-19, including people who are exhibiting symptoms of coronavirus. With regard to what OSHA would refer to as a "very high" risk environment, OSHA actually does not even provide a definition for this, and instead states that there should not be any situation in the construction context that could possibly exceed a "high" risk rating.

Employers should educate their employees on recognizing the symptoms of COVID-19 and encourage any employee displaying such symptoms to stay home from work. Though typically, those in the field will be outside and physically distanced, companies should encourage the wearing of masks (especially when coming in close contact with fellow employees, riding to and from jobsites, etc.), proper hygiene and handwashing, and for employees not to share tools without sanitizing them between users. Accordingly, the company would be well-advised to itself provide



ample access to hand sanitizers, soaps, first aid kits, and some form of face covering/masks. Companies should also post coronavirus related safety protocols in offices, work sites, and in company vehicles when practicable.

OSHA further recommends limiting in-person meetings only to the extent absolutely necessary. This could apply not only to meetings involving office staff and company officers and directors, but also on-site job and safety meetings. When accepting deliveries at job sites, the delivery driver should remain in the vehicle and all tools, materials, and supplies should be off loaded by company personnel. It is also recommended that whenever possible, it is beneficial to stagger work schedules by providing alternating workdays or extra shifts to reduce the total number of employees present on a job site at any time and encourage physical distancing.

COVID-19 Restrictions and Heat-Related Hazards

Even with Florida's hottest days presumably behind us this year, as Floridians, we don't really get "winters," and as such, oftentimes heat-related hazards in the workplace become even more prevalent during these upcoming "cooler months" as general complacency of the risks begins to set in. The fact is that heat-related illnesses and fatalities account for an astonishing percent of on-the-job injuries and deaths and

(continued pg. 8)

is oftentimes referred to as the silent killer. Construction workers, especially those working long hours outdoors, are particularly susceptible to heat injuries due to occupational risk factors. When combined with COVID-19 mandatory mask requirements and the elimination of communal water supplies, the heat could spell disaster for irrigation contractors. Throughout the summer and fall of 2020, we have received more calls concerning construction employees suffering from heat-related injury or illness than ever before.

Under OSHA's general duty clause, employers are responsible for providing workplaces that are free of known safety hazards, including protecting workers from heat-related illnesses. With this in mind, it is imperative that contractors plan for this hazard through a comprehensive heat-illness prevention program. Such a program or policy should be a part of your general workplace safety guidelines and procedures. Additionally, contractors can take advantage of free resources, such as OSHA's Heat

Safety Smartphone App (available on iPhone and Android). At a minimum, any safety program should address the following points:

1. Mitigating Heat-Related Hazards with Adequate Planning and Supervision

Heat conditions can change rapidly between and throughout workdays. Onsite and offsite management should monitor changing conditions and implement appropriate protocols to address extreme weather conditions. The individual who is responsible for implementing the heat plan should be on the site where work is occurring and be sufficiently trained to:

- Identify and control heat hazards;
- Recognize early symptoms of heat stress;
- Administer first aid for heat-related illnesses; and
- Activate emergency medical services quickly when needed.

2. New Workers – Special Considerations

Almost half of heat-related fatalities occur on a worker's first day. New and returning workers, as well as those exposed to rapid climate changes, should be given the opportunity to acclimate before working at ordinary capacity. These same considerations would apply not only to those new to your company or those new to the type of work being performed, but even to those just recently making the move down here to Florida from a more northern (cooler) state. Acclimation to Florida's muggy, hot, and humid climate is key.

To protect new workers from heat-related illness, OSHA recommends employers take special precautions for unacclimated workers for at least one to two weeks.

3. Train Workers to Recognize Hazards and Heat-Related Illness

All supervisors and workers should be trained to recognize hazards and heat-related illness. Factors that have a role in creating occupational heat stress include:

- Environmental conditions (such as air temperature, humidity, sunlight, and air speed);

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Florida Irrigation Society
Managing Every Drop™

Florida Contractor License Exam Prep Webinars 2021

Join the Florida Irrigation Society for a virtual exam preparation workshops for the required exams needed to obtain a Florida Irrigation State Contractor license. This format will allow those in remote areas or with limited travel time to participate in the Society's classes designed specifically for irrigation contractors. **Sessions are recorded so attendees can access them after the instruction period has ended.** Extra cost for study books. **Visit FISstate.org for registration information.**

Business/Finance	Technical
Cost: \$550/person	Cost: \$490/person
February 16-18	January 26-27
April 20-22	March 23-24
June 22-24	May 25-26
August 17-19	July 22 (in person, Jupiter, FL)
October 26-28	September 14-15
December 14-16	November 16-17

Use the 20% Rule: new or returning workers should only work 20 percent of their first day and an additional 20 percent each day thereafter. During work, they should take longer and more frequent breaks than acclimatized workers and should be closely monitored for symptoms of heat-related illness.

- Presence of heat sources (e.g., welders, furnaces);
- Level of physical activity involved in the work;
- Use of clothing or protective gear that will retain heat; and
- Individual/personal factors: for example, even temperatures as low as 77 degrees Fahrenheit

can present a hazard to acclimatized workers if the work is strenuous. Conveniently, OSHA provides a free heat stress calculator on its website in order to determine if conditions present a hazard.

All workers should be familiar with heat-illness prevention and first aid. This training should include:

- The types of heat-related illness (including how to recognize symptoms);
- The importance of immediately providing first aid;
- The procedures for contacting emergency medical services;
- The importance of protecting new workers;
- Job-related risk factors for heat illness;
- Fluid replacement guidelines and appropriate work/rest cycles; and
- The importance of taking rest breaks in shaded and cool areas.



Provide Appropriate Amounts of Water, Rest and Shade

OSHA recommends that employers provide cool water onsite and additional fluids that contain electrolytes for shifts exceeding even two hours. Employees should be encouraged to drink 8 ounces of water every 20 minutes while working outdoors in the heat. Two of the best ways to ensure workers comply with this guideline are:

1. Implementing uniform, site-wide water breaks; and
2. Making hydration convenient by providing water in a location that is near the work, easy to access, and of sufficient quantity.

Employees working in warm climates should also be required to take breaks. The length and frequency of breaks increases with the amount of heat stress. Factors influencing this decision include the amount of environmental heat, the level of physical activity required for the work, and the individual employee's personal risk factors. *For example, work/rest schedules are often based on 1-hour cycles calling for 15-minute rest periods every hour. However, in situations where the temperature and humidity are more extreme, even longer rest periods may be necessary.* Individual requirements will vary greatly, which is another reason employers would be smart to utilize OSHA's planning references to determine more specific, individualized requirements, then include that in your written heat-illness prevention plan.

(continued pg. 12)



To accomplish this training, OSHA provides a free lesson plan for employers online.



Navigating OSHA Restrictions in the Florida Heat During a Pandemic

With more and more cities and counties throughout Florida enforcing mandatory mask rules, those in the irrigation industry who may not typically be accustomed to having to wear masks while working (unlike other industries that may require N95 masks or other forms of PPE, such as respirators, while on the job), are now being forced to wear face coverings, which more often than not are cloth-based due to cost and/or convenience. Accordingly, crew members and workers alike should be mindful of the ambient heat created by wearing masks, as well as the inherent limitation in air flow (i.e., breathability). Crew leaders need to ensure that mandatory water/rest breaks are taking place to help ensure that overheating does not occur. And with many, if not most, communal water sources being eliminated altogether on worksites (with water bottles being the new norm), it's especially important to ensure that your crews are staying well hydrated even if that means forcing them to take mandatory water breaks. Always defer to both CDC and OSHA guidelines when it comes to safety.

Navigating OSHA regulations and other safety requirements can be a daunting task even before mixing in COVID-19 restrictions, but with

education, training, and proper workplace policies, employers in the irrigation industry can sleep a little better at night knowing their employees are working in the safest conditions possible, while also better protecting their livelihood from the wrath of governmental interference and enforcement efforts.

Author's Note: The information contained in this article is for general educational purposes only. This information does not constitute legal advice, is not intended to constitute legal advice, nor should it be relied upon as legal advice for your specific factual pattern or situation.

Benjamin Lute is an advocate for the irrigation industry, Partner and attorney at Cotney Construction Law, LLP, and General Legal Counsel for the Florida Irrigation Society. For more information, you are welcome to contact the author at 813-200-7170, blute@cotneycl.com, or visit www.cotneycl.com.

**Special thanks to Richard Anderson for his assistance with this article. ■*



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*General Legal Counsel for
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ELECTRICAL OVERSTRESS

Back in the halogen and incandescent days of landscape lighting, it was a common practice by many contractors to install lamps while the system was on. This is known as a "hot plug-in". This practice has been widely used especially if a contractor was out providing maintenance on a lighting system.

As we have evolved into the era of LED light sources, the practice of hot plugging should be avoided. The reason for this is that it is virtually impossible to be 100% sure that there will not be the slightest electrical arc when a lamp is inserted into a socket or a connection is made with live cable. A hot plug-in can cause an "electrical over stress" (EOS) on many parts of the internal circuitry of an LED lamp or integrated fixture.



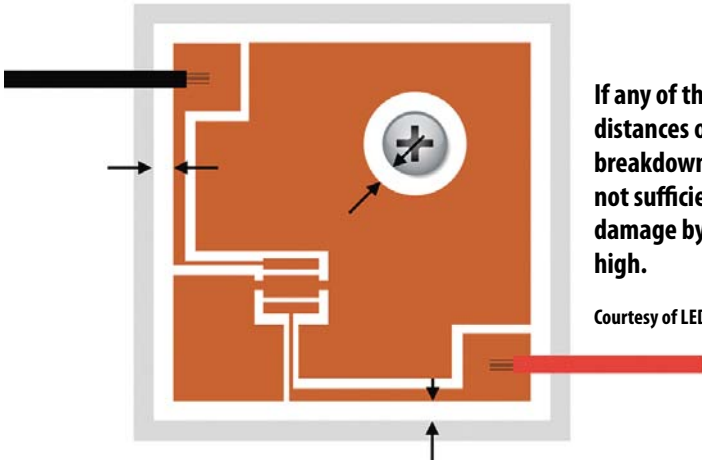
KEVIN SMITH
NATIONAL TECHNICAL SUPPORT
AND TRAINER
BRILLIANCE LED, LLC

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EOS can simply be described as an electrical component that is operated beyond its maximum rated electrical limit accidentally or deliberately according to its rating on the specification sheet. In landscape lighting EOS can occur with a hot plug-in, a lightning strike, or a poorly made connection.

EOS can also have an adverse effect on a fixture that requires a remote low voltage driver. If a driver is

(continued pg. 16)



If any of the creepage distances or the PCB breakdown voltage is not sufficient, the risk for damage by an EOS is very high.

Courtesy of LED Professional

SOME COMMON SIGNS OF EOS

- One or more diodes out; in this case, the bonding wires inside the LED device have been broken.
- Another sign could be a pungent burnt smell emitted from the lamp.
- In some cases the back of the lamp may show a burn hole, especially with lightning.

The question now is how do we change the hot plug-in install? My suggestion would be that when performing maintenance on an older system, unplug the transformer before installing the

LED lamp or integrated fixture to ensure the power is off to the socket. This same method can also be used on new installations with a standard landscape lighting transformer. If you happen to be working with a smart app driven transformer, ensure the remote control has the system off. Most of the smart phone apps will allow for a simple on and off for the transformer.

Ultimately, to avoid EOS, make sure to have solid potted cable connections and no power to the fixtures upon installation. If a situation arises where lightning has caused the EOS, check to see if the homeowner's insurance will cover lightning damages. ■

IN MEMORIAM



STEVEN KING

Educator and Professional Irrigator
October 25, 1962 - October 17, 2020

We at the Florida Irrigation Society are sad to announce the passing of Steven C. King. Steve was a 35-year industry professional in the contracting, education and conservation fields of irrigation. Steve passed away unexpectedly on October 17, 2020 of natural causes.

Steve received an AA degree from Catabawa Technical College majoring in irrigation and horticulture and spent many years as an independent irrigation/landscaping contractor before and after going into education.

Steve was best known in our industry as the irrigation instructor at Lake City Community College.

Because of his lifelong passion for water conservation and preserving Florida's aquifers, in 1997 he spearheaded the development of a curriculum for a new degree program in Irrigation and Golf Course Maintenance. It was the first of its kind in the country. In the ten plus years he taught at the college the program produced many of our Florida irrigation professionals still in the industry today.

He is survived by his three children Hillery Maher, Dustin King, Stephanie King; brothers Ken and Scott; father Charles King and 8 grandchildren. FIS knows that his legacy and passion for water conservation will continue through those he taught and touched in the Florida community of consumers and irrigation professionals.



FIS HALTS IMPROPER RULE CHANGE

TO STATE IRRIGATION CONTRACTOR LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

Author's Note: The information contained in this article is for general educational purposes only. This information does not constitute legal advice, is not intended to constitute legal advice, nor should it be relied upon as legal advice for your specific factual pattern or situation.

For many years, the Florida Irrigation Society worked tirelessly to push the State to recognize irrigation contractors as an industry worthy of state certification. Among other things, FIS desired for its members uniformity of licensure requirements across the board (versus varying and wildly inconsistent local regulations), as well as a way to distinguish irrigation contractors from "irrigation contractors." Those efforts paid off in 2013 when the Florida Construction Industry Licensing Board ("CILB") wrote into the Florida Administrative Code, Rule 61G4-15.035 – Certification of Irrigation Specialty Contractors. Although irrigation state certification is voluntary, as opposed to mandatory, the primary goals as stated above were nevertheless accomplished.

As many of you know, earlier this year, the CILB initiated what is known as the "rulemaking process" to implement certain changes to the law governing the certification of irrigation specialty contractors within the state of Florida (Florida Admin. Code 61G4-15.035). Specifically, the proposed rule change sought to provide an "alternative" to the work experience requirements established by the Florida Statutes, which governs all state-level contractor licensure, by permitting a license applicant to substitute actual work experience in the field with "certifications" that could be issued by national or statewide trade associations or organizations. The kicker, however, is that such "certification" wouldn't necessarily have to be irrigation-based but could simply be a "professional landscape" certification. Though the proposed change did not seek to completely eliminate the experience requirement, it did seek to diminish it with the substitution of certifications. For context, it is important to note that this proposed rule change was not something the CILB came up with on its own out of the blue, but instead was an initiative pushed through and advocated by another trade association (not FIS), which might explain the desire to lax experience requirements and instead allow landscape-oriented certifications to suffice. Regardless, FIS believes the rule change would

not have benefitted irrigation contractors in any way, and would have only opened the flood gates to state-level certifications being issued to those without proper, adequate irrigation experience, and as such, FIS sought to take a stand and oppose the rule's implementation into law.



BENJAMIN LUTE, ESQ.
COTNEY CONSTRUCTION LAW

Accordingly, under direction of the FIS Board and Executive Committee, FIS General Counsel submitted a formal request for public hearing to

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the CILB on behalf of the Society and its members, seeking to have the proposed rule change reconsidered and ultimately withdrawn. The basis was simple, and more so a matter of law than one of opinion: The CILB did not have the authority to make such a change to the law, and therefore, the proposed rule was legally improper. Essentially, the way it works is that the people vote into office elected officials who make up the state legislature. The state legislature creates the laws through state statutes (the Florida Statutes), which the Florida Statutes itself contains laws governing state agencies, as well as delegates certain specified duties and powers to those state agencies. Note that the CILB is considered a division of the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (“DBPR”), which is a state agency. Generally speaking, agencies are granted rather broad discretion as it pertains to the manner in which they operate and regulate whatever it is that they were created to regulate. However, when it comes to an agency creating, abolishing, or otherwise changing actual law, a state agency must have actual authority to do so. “Authority,” in this context, meaning permission granted by the state legislature via the Florida Statutes.

But why is this important? Why does it really matter? Well, if state agencies were permitted free reign to create law however they saw fit, they’d have the power to make laws inconsistent with, and even contradictory to, existing laws already enacted by the legislature. As a general principle, to the extent that rules and regulations are actually necessary, we the people tend to prefer that obligation lie with those whom we have the power to vote in, but also vote out of office—which would be those within the state legislature, and not those running state agencies. This hierarchy of lawmaking is intended to eliminate inconsistent law, but also help ensure that our elected officials can ultimately be held accountable by their constituents for the lawmaking decisions made.

At the end of the day, in this particular instance, the CILB simply did not have the statutory authority to change the law as was proposed. The Florida Statutes specifically govern the requirements for licensure of state certified contractors, including required work experience, and therefore, the CILB did not, and does not, have the ability to change that on its own. Ultimately, the CILB agreed.

On October 16, 2020, FIS General Counsel appeared before the CILB Board in a packed house for the public hearing. The only opposition

(continued pg. 22)

2021 OFFICER ELECTION RESULTS

The ballots were counted and the results are in. Congratulations to the newly elected Officers of the Florida Irrigation Society for the year 2021. They are the following:

- President - Tom Allen, CLM Landscaping**
- Vice President - Randy Heimsoth, Peerless Landscaping**
- Secretary - Matthew Shreves, Weathermatic**
- Treasurer - Steven Jenkins, Jenkins Landscaping**

Due to the chaotic year that the COVID pandemic forced on our businesses and our Society, the 2020 officers kindly agreed to take on another term. Larry Lentz, Independent Contractor remains on the Executive Committee as Immediate Past President. The continuation of this leadership team will help the Society stay on its path of service to the members and the industry.

Every voting member (Contractor, Manufacturer, Distributor, Consultant, Irrigation Operator) was mailed a ballot to vote or write-in their choice of officers for FIS. The majority (with the exception of one write-in ballot) was for the nominees as presented. We thank all who participated in the voting process and look forward to a healthy and successful 2021.



Tom Allen
President



Randy Heimsoth
Vice President



Matthew Shreves
Secretary



Steven Jenkins
Treasurer



to FIS's position came from the one specific trade association who had been pushing for the rule change from its inception. At the close of the public presentations, Assistant Attorney General Robert Milne sided with the Society's position and the Board unanimously voted to withdraw the rule. On October 30, 2020, a Notice of Withdrawal was filed with the Florida Administrative Register making the CILB's decision final.

Download the Florida application as shown on MyFloridaLicense.com

A small victory for the Florida Irrigation Society and its members, but a huge win for the industry as a whole. Experience remains as originally required with several paths

available to fulfill the requirement.

A person will qualify for a certified license by meeting one of the following requirements:

- Four year construction-related degree from an accredited college (equivalent to three years experience) and one year proven experience applicable to the category for which you are applying.
- One year experience as a foreman and not less than three years of credits from accredited college-level courses.
- One year experience as a worker, one year experience as a foreman, and two years of credits from accredited college-level courses.
- Two years experience as a worker, one year experience as a foreman, and one year of credits from accredited college-level courses.
- Four years experience as a worker or foreman of which at least one year must have been as a foreman.

MILITARY VETERANS: A veteran will qualify for a certified license by meeting one of the following:

- Three years of military service and one year experience as a foreman applicable to the category.
- Two years of military service, one year experience as a foreman, and one year experience as a worker or foreman applicable to the category for which you are applying.
- One year of military service, one year experience as a foreman, and two years experience as a worker or foreman applicable to the category for which you are applying.

If you have questions about general licensure information and application and exam preparation webinars, etc., please contact the Florida Irrigation Society's office at 727-209-1595 or email administration@fisstate.org. ■

Florida Irrigation Society



JULY 23-24, 2021
WYNDHAM GRAND, JUPITER BEACH

All 14 hours of CEU credits available for State Irrigation Contractor License Renewal and the following Counties: Pinellas, Lake, Volusia, Palm Beach, Miami/Dade.

Technical and Management Workshops taught by experts in their field. Save the Date for you and your employees to attend. Early Bird Registration will open soon. Ask about sponsorships and table top exhibit opportunities.

Visit www.fisstate.org for more details.



GOOD NEWS FOR FLORIDA IRRIGATION CONTRACTORS - WORKER'S COMP RATES TO DECREASE

The Florida Insurance Commissioner, David Altmaier, recently issued a Final Order granting approval to the National Council on Compensation Insurance (NCCI) for a statewide overall decrease of 6.6% for Florida workers' compensation insurance rates. This applies to both new and renewal workers' compensation insurance policies effective in Florida as of January 1, 2021.

CFO Jimmy Patronis said, "The statewide overall 6.6 percent workers' compensation insurance rate decrease is a major win for Florida businesses as we work to rebuild our economy and ensure job creators have the ability to get Floridians back to work. As your CFO, one of my top priorities is to attract job creators and innovators to the state of Florida and this rate reduction is yet another reason why the Sunshine State is where businesses come to thrive. Our small businesses are the backbone of our economy and every Florida community benefits when they see cost savings. This is yet another example of why there is no better place to live, work, and run a business than right here in Florida."

For Florida Irrigation Contractors the savings over the 2020 rates is shown in the table below:

Classification Code	2020-2021 Rates	Amount Decrease
0042, Landscape Gardening & Drivers	7.92 to 7.10	Down 10.3%
9102, Lawn Maintenance—Commercial or Domestic & Drivers	4.13 to 3.77	Down 8.7%
5183, Lawn Sprinkler System Install—Underground & Drivers	3.86 to 3.68	Down 4.6%

Good Safety Practices Help Keep the Overall Worker's Compensation Rates Low

In addition to the decrease other tools available to companies to keep Experience mods in check are a "2,500 Net Deductible," return to work light duty programs, and broad managed care networks. Check with FIS supporting insurance company members Federated Insurance and McGriff Insurance Services about the programs they have for contractors. ■



'21 FISHING TOURNAMENT

Now in two locations

Islamorada - June 4-5, 2021
Stuart - August 27-28, 2021

Save the date for one or both. Cash prizes, raffle prizes galore, trophies, fun and great fishing!! Book your boat and captain early. Discounted hotel room rates for the tournaments available through FIS at the Islander, Postcard Inn & Marina, and Amara Cay Resort in Islamorada and the Pirate's Cove Resort and Marina, Stuart.

Contact the FIS office for hotel rates and reservations at 727-209-1595 or email administration@fisstate.org. Official Tournament registration available in January. Ask about sponsorship opportunities.

ROSTER OF FIS MEMBERS WHO HOLD STATE CONTRACTOR LICENSES

Alberto Arazoza, Arazoza Brothers Corp./
Dedicated Property Service SCC131151972/
SCC131152044

Jack A. Baldwin, Ted Conner Landscaping
SCC131151827

Kenneth R. Bing, Research Irrigation, Inc.
SCC131151810

Christopher Bouyea, Florida Irrigation LLC
SCC131152083

Jerry Brown, Florida Ground Control, Inc.
SCC131152057

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Saving More Than Water

All the best irrigation technology in the world means nothing unless we know what's going on in the landscapes we manage. The challenge is how to keep our eyes on our landscapes without having to hang out at the site everyday all day.

Fortunately, there are a few irrigation systems which would allow you to affordably monitor your irrigation systems without having to gas up the F-350 and drive out to the site. In the old days, these were called "central control" systems and meant that you had to load software on a dedicated computer and install highly technical and expensive communication devices to provide monitoring capability to your landscape. Today those systems are pretty much obsolete and have been replaced with simple, more affordable cloud based systems enabling you to remotely access your irrigation systems from anywhere in the world via laptop, tablet, and even smartphone.



Today's systems have evolved into less "central" control and more "remote" control. The end result is still the same ... in that it allows the end user complete oversight of the system and management of all aspects of an irrigation system from a remote location. The key differences with today's solutions are their ability to enable the

end user to manage their system from anywhere and the "data" for their system to reside in the cloud vs. on a lone computer which needs to be backed up and whose hardware needs to be upgraded every so often.

Factor #3 UPGRADE TO REMOTE MONITORING AND REPORTING

Having the ability to remotely manage your irrigation system saves fuel and hours of travel time to and from locations to adjust irrigation schedules, change time and date for daylight savings time, shut down for rainfall, and other programming issues. Remote control enables these changes to be made quickly.

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For those in the maintenance business, even if your irrigation technician is charging the client for driving to the site to make these irrigation adjustments, you are likely not charging enough for the service call. The average billing rate for many is less than 50% of their total labor burden which makes having profitable irrigation services a real challenge. One of the best ways to improve this is to improve the labor efficiency of the irrigation techs. Taking advantage of affordable remote access irrigation technology is the easiest and most efficient way to do this.

Also, using remote access to eliminate trips to the site to adjust irrigation doesn't necessarily mean you have to forego billing the client for a service call. As we have seen in other industries, customers are willing to pay for valued services even if those services are made much more efficient through the adoption of new technology (think computer hardware and software support). Taking advantage of technology still allows the irrigation tech to provide a service and therefore bill for the service; but he can do so at a much more efficient cost. Most clients would also be supportive of an effort to reduce the amount of dollars they spend on irrigation service calls. For the technology savvy irrigation tech, remote access to an irrigation system can dramatically decrease his labor burden, thereby greatly improving his profitability.

As an example: if you originally charged \$80/hr for a service call but your labor burden was \$75/hr, you made \$5. But even if you charge a flat \$50 for a "virtual service call" but your labor burden was reduced to \$25/hr because of remote access, your net gain would likely be \$25. And reducing your irrigation service calls from \$80/hr to a flat \$50 for irrigation adjustments would likely please your client as well.

Having the ability to remotely make adjustments to a client's irrigation controller wouldn't entirely eliminate the need to drive the property to look at irrigation but it can eliminate a good number of trips per year per controller.

Overall, eliminating any trips to the controller reduces labor costs, fuel use, maintenance on vehicles and your company's carbon footprint therefore contributing to a sustainable company image.

Get Smart

Another important distinction of today's smart control systems is the ability of a cloud based system to be updated when changes are needed to either add a new feature or fix a software bug. This is typically done through an overnight update and usually is unseen by the end user.

Also because many of these newer systems are modular in their architecture, the cost for the average size system is much more affordable than even a few years ago. This enables landscapes of any size to be "centralized" which can greatly increase the efficiency of maintenance crews to maintain the sites' irrigation systems. It is as we say at Weathermatic, "central control for the rest of us".

Today's central control systems have truly evolved into "smart" control systems. Smart has been redefined in recent years to mean more than ET. For a system to be smart today, it must be able to manage the many aspects of an ever changing landscape by automating the appropriate reaction to a given situation. It is all part of what is becoming known as the Internet of Things (IoT) which can be defined as "data which is transferred from smart device to smart device to enable quick and effective reaction to a given situation through sensor inputs by way of wireless communication." In other words, smart devices do the thinking and reacting for us based on our preferences. So it seems that smart irrigation controllers should be able to save tremendous amounts of water. Unfortunately many of us still don't trust the "smartness" of these systems which, ironically, are only reacting based on the preferences we have set up. As the well-known quote from the 1950's comic strip Pogo immortalized; "we have met the enemy and he is us".

I've Got My Eye On You

This brings us to the point of this discussion. The success of any smart control system is dependent on our ability to keep the system operating as intended. To do so we must insist that the system is monitored by multiple users to verify the system is doing what is supposed to do. To raise the level of visibility of the system operation is likely to make many service providers nervous. It is really the only way to hold all those involved in the long term success of the project accountable. Too many "smart" systems have failed to accomplish any significant water savings because it is too easy to intentionally, or unintentionally, turn the smart

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features off without anyone's knowledge. This is often a reaction to the system doing something the user doesn't understand.

Therefore the more eyes we have on the site, the more efficiently we can manage what we see. Visibility by multiple users insures our landscape and irrigation system is monitored regularly and alarms are attended to quickly. After all, what good is a flow sensor which reacts to a sprinkler break or a pump failure if it has no way of telling us what is going on? Without remote communication, our irrigation system has no way to talk to us to tell us something is wrong. In such a case we wouldn't know we had a sprinkler break until someone notices the plant material slowly dying because it isn't getting any water (due to the flow sensor repeatedly shutting down the zone during each irrigation cycle).

Key to efficient monitoring is automated, system generated, notification of alerts and alarms requiring user attention. These types of site alerts can include flow sensor alarms for high and low flow, irrigation program changes, changes from smart mode to standard mode, rain shut down, system off mode, irrigation component failures, and other issues which require user attention for the system to operate efficiently.

Irrigation conditions such as high and low flow alarms, electrical issues, communication issues, valve failures, and notification for automated rain shutdown, change to no-ET mode, and controller off mode, are important circumstances that site managers and owners need to know about quickly.

The challenge we face in enabling multiple users to have access and more importantly to know when a system is doing what it was designed to .do, is our ability to interact with the system without the need to seek out information about system status. Essentially we need a system which proactively "talks to us" when there is a problem.



It's a good thing there are no pesky plants in the way of our efficient sprinklers

Most web-based smart systems like Weathermatic's Smartlink make this easy to accomplish through the use of emails and text messages. Even if most stake holders don't monitor every detail of a system each day, having the ability to notify them of important changes to the system can eliminate missed opportunities to manage the system as expected.

We Have Something to Prove

Complementing the ability to remotely monitor our irrigation system is our ability to document our progress toward water conservation. Ideally we need to prove we are accomplishing the intended goals for the site regarding water savings and restriction compliance. To do this our system needs the ability to generate basic water use data and reports. Too many times irrigation systems are installed or upgraded to smart control with the promise of water savings only to fail to deliver because no one was monitoring day to day water I water management strategy has to include benchmark objectives that can be verified throughout the year to insure goals are met at the end of the year and beyond.

As many in the irrigation industry can attest, most new irrigation systems are designed and installed with the best intentions, only to fail to meet expectations long term because no one verified that the system maintained operational efficiency through the next few years.

This is the biggest issue with the water saving goals of LEED, Sustainable Sites Initiative, California's MWEL0 (AB 1881) and others. Without verification or enforcement to maintain the certification status of these irrigation systems, most will fail to achieve what the system was designed to achieve.

I recently had the opportunity to audit the LEED Silver Certified sustainable flagship location for a large hotel chain. Although the design for the project was well intended, there was a significant issue which would have disqualified the property from being considered landscape water efficient.

Most of the property was watered using efficient drip irrigation however a few zones near the front entrance utilized rotating nozzles on 4 inch pop-up sprayheads. These front zones were irrigating a 21 degree slope with cool season turf grass planted in clay soil. As you might imagine I was curious to see how these zones were programmed. What I discovered

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was similar to what most of us see every day in our business. Although the run time was segmented into 4 cycle times per day, the run time for each was programmed for 16 minutes. After reviewing my soil/slope chart I determined the run time was 13 minutes too long for each cycle and thus the system was wasting 80% of the water it was applying each time it ran. After some quick calculations I determined these few zones were wasting \$4,200 worth of water per year. In addition, the 1-year old parking lot which the slope drained to, was already showing signs of water damage.

Adding insult to injury, while checking the run times at the controller location, I noticed a couple of wires disconnected from the controller. Tracing these wires back to their source I discovered the rain sensor had also been disconnected. Needless to say the general manager of the hotel was anxious to have us remedy these issues as quickly as possible and have monitoring and reporting established to verify the irrigation system is maintained efficiently.

The most important point of this scenario is how these issues could have been prevented had there been a process in place to verify system efficiency after the initial installation.

By remotely monitoring your sites and providing reports to the client, most irrigation professionals can easily guarantee the most water efficient systems stay at the peak performance. ■



Florida Water Star JOINT EFFORTS

Florida's population is projected to grow by 62% over the next 50 years from 21 million to 34 million people. Population growth will bring significant increases in commercial and residential development, resulting in even more water demand in the region. To help meet these water supply needs, local governments, water managers, builders and developers are working cooperatively through the Florida Water Star_{SM} (FWS) program.



Developed nearly two decades ago, FWS offers an affordable, achievable certification for builders to improve water efficiency in newly constructed residential homes, communities and commercial developments. The major components of FWS include water-efficient design and installation both inside and outside the property.

Studies by the University of Florida, the Toho Water Authority and On Top of the World

Communities have shown water savings of approximately 48,000 gallons per home annually, saving homeowners roughly \$530 each year on energy and water utility bills.

In 2017, FWS partnered with the Certified Ratings Program sponsored by the Florida Home Builders Association to administer the certification of

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FWS homes. The program utilizes international inspection standards for every home. This relationship was crucial to gain acceptance from Florida's building community, and now state and local builders associations support and promote the FWS program and are pleased to have a clear pathway to building water-efficient homes.

It is not just builders who have partnered with the FWS program. Since its launch in 2006, local governments and utilities have relied on the program to implement consistent language related to water-efficiency in their building codes and to offer financial incentives to builders for achieving FWS certification.

OPTION ONE

A third-party inspection is conducted by a trained FWS inspector and official FWS certification is obtained. In this option, the builder is eligible to receive a \$700 rebate per home if construction is taking place in Polk County.

OPTION TWO

The builder submits affidavits stating that the FWS criteria have been met. A third-party inspection does not take place and the rebate is not available.

Local governments are beginning to take FWS a step further by requiring builders to meet FWS criteria to obtain their Certificate of Occupancy. Builders have two options to meet the code requirements. The two options provide the builder with some flexibility.

Local governments within Polk County that have written FWS into ordinance include Davenport, Mulberry, Lake Alfred, Lake Hamilton, Polk City and Bartow. Staff from the three water management districts continue to provide materials and presentations to governments that are interested in updating their codes or currently working with their water management district on permit renewals.

Aside from the FWS rebates offered through Tampa Bay Water (\$1,000 per FWS-certified home), Polk County (\$700 per FWS-certified home) and other utility and water supplier rebates across the state, additional benefits to builders include the option of hiring an FWS Accredited Professional (AP). In partnership with the Florida Nursery and Landscape Association, the FWS AP program has trained over a thousand professionals from the landscape and irrigation

industry to be better prepared to design and install water-efficient landscapes and irrigation systems. In addition, builder's realtor staff receive training on selling the benefits and features of an FWS-certified home to their customers. New FWS-certified homeowners receive plaques and documentation to help increase the value of their home. ■

To learn more about FWS, visit floridawaterstar.com or contact the FWS representative in your water management district at:

SJRWMD – Deirdre Irwin dirwin@sjrwmd.com

SFWWMD – Robin Grantham Robin.Grantham@WaterMatters.org

SFWMD – Robert Wanvestraut rowanves@sfwmd.gov

WHAT WERE THEY THINKING?



A little irrigation humor contributed by our members. Have any "What Were They Thinking?" pictures to share? Email them to administration@fisstate.org.



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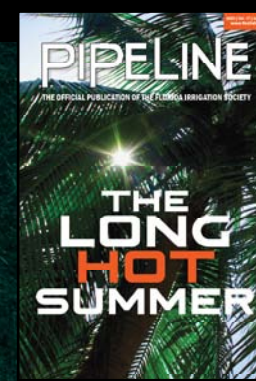
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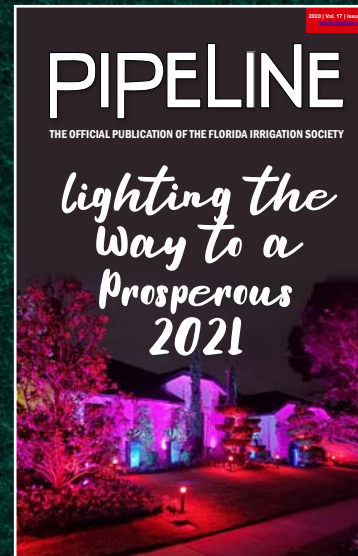
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Would you like information about your local chapter: Yes No

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Please indicate your Category and enclose relevant dues

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*Students retain all Membership rights except voting representation.

*Supporting Members are individuals that wish to be members that are not in the irrigation industry. (Example: Insurance Agents, Auto Dealers, etc.)

Please tell us about yourself so we can better serve your specific industry needs

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