



The Parks and Recreation Department is currently experiencing technical difficulties beyond our control with the operation of all irrigation systems. Landscape watering at parks, athletic sites, public buildings, and on medians are being affected.

All irrigation systems are controlled by a central computer. The watering programs are transmitted from the computer to the irrigation system controllers through the use of a UHF radio frequency.

Unknown to Plano, a new radio system (jointly utilized by the public safety departments in three small cities south of Dallas) was being tested and brought on-line this summer. This new system was given a primary use license by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for the same UHF frequency. Due to the power of their transmission signal, it is interfering with the low power signal used by Plano to control irrigation systems. The interference effectively disables the controllers. Plano's use of the frequency for data transmission is considered secondary by the FCC. Plano did not receive notice that this would be happening and, as a result, there was no opportunity to make irrigation or radio system modifications in a timely manner before the summer months.

Consequently, over 500 controllers must be individually programmed on-site. This "stand-alone" mode does not incorporate any of the advanced features that are used when they are controlled by the computer. These features include alerting staff when there are malfunctions, and shutting systems off where there are leaks or line breaks. Also, weather stations provide the computer with information that in turn adjusts the amount of water being applied by the controller.

Systems may break or malfunction and not turn off or they may not run at all causing plant material and turf to stress. Since Plano does not have the level of staffing needed to monitor all of the systems without the technology, **residents of Plano are encouraged to assist by calling our park maintenance staff at 972-941-7263 to report any problems observed with public irrigation systems or plant material that is under stress.** All attempts will be made to correct the problem as soon as it is reported.

The irrigation system components will be modified as soon as possible so the City of Plano can utilize a different radio frequency. The system updates should be complete by summer 2009.