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## **CONSERVATION CORNER: IT'S TIME TO BEGIN SHUTTING DOWN IRRIGATION SYSTEMS AND SWAMP COOLERS FOR FALL**

**submitted by the Office of the State Engineer's Water Use and Conservation Bureau**

**(SANTA FE, New Mexico)** – A chill is in the air. Winter is on the way. The chiles have been roasted, peeled, and put up for the season. A couple of chores still remain. It's time to shutdown irrigation systems and evaporative coolers.

Before the first hard freeze, which in Santa Fe is typically around mid-October, the controller must be turned off and the irrigation system winterized by completing the following steps:

- (1) Shut off the main water supply.
- (2) Open the manual drain valves in the system and the bleed screws on the zone valves to drain the system.
- (3) Completely drain the backflow preventer and leave the test cocks open.
- (4) Insulate the inside of the valve box around the zone valves.

For those irrigation systems that are directly connected to a hose bib rather than the main water supply, it is important that all hoses or lines be disconnected before any sign of a hard freeze. It is advisable, in the Santa Fe area, to shut off the water supply and disconnect the hoses or lines at the beginning of October to prevent potential freeze damage.

Interior water pipes are susceptible to bursting if an exterior water source that is connected to them is allowed to freeze. It is best to leave all hoses disconnected throughout the cold, winter months. Remove and drain any battery operated timers or controllers and pressure regulators that are connected to a water supply source in order to keep them from freezing and splitting. They should be stored in a warm, dry place for the winter.

**(MORE)**

Even though the irrigation system is shut down, it is very important to maintain fall and winter watering schedules by hand watering. Trees, shrubs, perennials and lawns will all benefit from cool season watering. Fall is a great time to plant and newly planted material will require watering to survive the winter. Fall and winter dehydration kills roots. Providing water to plant roots during the dry fall and winter months helps preserve root systems and maintain plant health. Look for next month's Round the Roundhouse column "*Conservation Corner: Fall in the Garden*" for more tips about cool season planting and maintenance.

All evaporative coolers (also known as "swamp coolers") should be shut down before the first hard freeze. Winterize swamp coolers by completing the following steps:

- (1) Turn off the water supply and drain the water tray.
- (2) Gently scrape out any debris or mineral buildup from the water tray with a wire brush or putty brush. Vinegar can be used to dissolve the mineral deposits.
- (3) Disconnect the water line from the cooler to prevent freeze damage.
- (4) Cover the swamp cooler during the winter months to prevent cold air from entering the house.

The Water Use and Conservation Bureau of the Office of the State Engineer and the City of Santa Fe will soon be releasing a new DVD: "*Irrigation Maintenance 101.*" Copies are available by contacting 1-800-WATERNM.

For more helpful conservation tips, visit the Office of the State Engineer website at [www.ose.state.nm.us](http://www.ose.state.nm.us) under "Conservation."

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*The Interstate Stream Commission is charged with separate duties including protecting New Mexico's right to water under eight interstate stream compacts, ensuring the state complies with each of those compacts, as well as water planning.*

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