

# MODEL WATER EFFICIENT LANDSCAPE ORDINANCE

## 2015 UPDATE

Governor Brown's Drought Executive Order of April 1, 2015 (EO B-29-15) directed the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to update the State's Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELO) through expedited regulation. The CA Water Commission approved the revised Ordinance on July 15, 2015. The directive specifically lists five items that local jurisdictions must address in updating their own landscape ordinances.

- Irrigation system efficiency standards
- Graywater usage
- Onsite storm water capture
- Limiting the percentage of turf planted in new landscapes
- Reporting on the implementation and enforcement of the ordinance

The State revisions require greater efficiencies than the landscape standard adopted by the Building Standards Commission on May 29, 2015. The Commission has committed to revise their standards to be consistent with DWR's landscape ordinance. ***The MWELO will become effective December 1, 2015 and will be applicable to Escondido projects until the local ordinance update becomes effective in 2016.***

### PROPOSED REVISIONS:

#### Projects Subject to the Ordinance

- New construction projects that require a building or landscape permit, plan check or design review and include an aggregate landscape area of 500 SF or more.
- Rehabilitated landscape projects with an aggregate landscape area of 2500 SF or more requiring a building or landscape permit, plan check, or design review.

#### Significant Revisions

- Dedicated landscape water meters or submeters are required for residential landscapes over 5000 SF and non-residential landscapes over 1000 SF.
- Irrigation systems are required to have pressure regulators and master shut-off valves.
- Irrigation systems must be designed so that a precipitation rate of 1.0 inch per hour is not exceeded in any portion of the landscape.
- Flow sensors that detect and report high flow conditions due to broken pipes and/or popped sprinkler heads are required for landscape areas greater than 5000 SF.

- The minimum width of area that can be overhead irrigated was changed from 8 feet to 10 feet; areas less than 10 feet wide must be irrigated with subsurface drip or other technology that produces no overspray or runoff.
- Incentives are added to encourage the use of graywater systems.
- Friable soil in landscape areas and incorporation of compost in areas planted to turf is required to maximize water retention and infiltration.
- The maximum amount of water that can be applied to a landscape is reduced from 70% of the reference evapotranspiration (ET<sub>o</sub>) to 55% for residential landscapes, and to 45% of ET<sub>o</sub> for non-residential projects.
- The irrigation efficiency factors are revised to 0.81 for drip and 0.75 for overhead spray.
- All local agencies are required to submit an annual report to DWR.
- An option was added for projects with landscape areas under 2500 SF that allows them to conform to prescriptive measures contained in Appendix D of the MWELo

The DWR will release a guidance document to accompany the Ordinance in Fall 2015.

**Revised MWELo can be read here:**

<http://www.water.ca.gov/wateruseefficiency/landsceordinance/>

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**Related water conservation information for the city of Escondido:**

<http://www.escondido.org/water-conservation.aspx>