

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****November 4, 2025**

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**SUBJECT: IRRIGATION ORDINANCE COMPLIANCE – 2025 UPDATE**

The Water Utility continues to prioritize water conservation through enforcement of the City's Irrigation Ordinance, which limits watering to twice per week and prohibits irrigation between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. With the support of the MyH2O program, staff monitor hourly water use, identify violations, and notify customers of violations through postcards, emails, and text messages.

This Informal Report follows Informal Report 24-1895 (September 10, 2024), which described the City's early emphasis on outreach and voluntary compliance. That report documented the communication process and noted that while fees and lockouts are available enforcement tools, they had not yet been applied. Beginning in March 2025, fees were introduced to commercial customers with dedicated irrigation meters as well as residential customers for repeated violations. Fees are assessed for residential customers based on visual inspection to confirm that usage in violation of the ordinance is for irrigation, while commercial customers use a dedicated irrigation meter and irrigation violations can be based on remote read meter usage data.

While somewhat successful, these enforcement measures have not resulted in the behavioral changes needed to achieve the level of compliance required for sustainable conservation goals, or reducing overall gallons per capita per day (GPCD) consumption. Summer peak demands from irrigation remain extremely high, while average daily use remains well above winter baseline levels, underscoring the need for further action to meet conservation goals.

**2025 Statistics**

The current enforcement process includes an initial irrigation advisory warning for the first violation, a \$25 fee for the next violation, followed by a \$50 and \$75 fee for continued violations in succeeding months. From March through October 20, 2025, the utility issued:

- 49,860 Notices of Violation (87.6% residential customers)
- 4,233 Irrigation Fees of \$25 (4.9% residential customers)
- 3,055 Irrigation Fees of \$50 (1.7% residential customers)
- 1,757 Irrigation Fees of \$75 (.8% residential customers)

The chart on the following page includes a break out by month on the above actions.

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Figure 1: Advisories and irrigation fees applied in 2025 through October 20

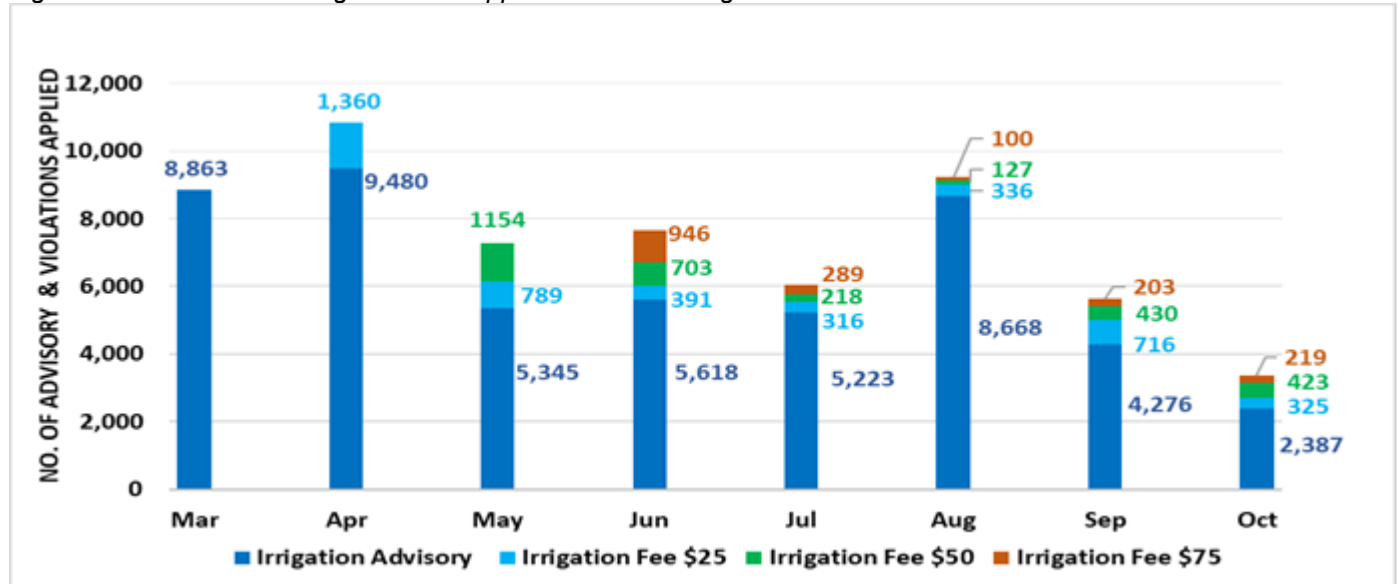


Fig. 1 shows continued violations and the fees applied in 2025. Data shown is the number of customers in violation rather than actual violation counts, as some customers may have more than one violation. Actual number of violations is considerably higher.

Despite steady outreach and application of fees, violation trends indicate that additional measures are needed to achieve consistent compliance and meaningful water-use reduction. To address this, the utility is refining its enforcement process as outlined below.

### Enforcement Process

The Irrigation Ordinance allows the City to address violations through a progressive enforcement process while providing flexibility to act immediately when conditions warrant. The goal remains voluntary compliance; however, sustained violations or nuisance conditions require decisive measures to prevent water waste, reduce peak demands on the water system, and prevent infrastructure damage.

Under a revised enforcement framework developed this past summer and being clarified for transparency in proposed ordinance modifications, the following graduated steps will generally apply:

- First violation: Written notice of violation accompanied by educational information on proper irrigation scheduling.
- Second violation: Administrative fee of \$25.
- Third violation: Administrative fee of \$50.
- Fourth violation: Administrative fee of \$75 and written notification by US mail to the property owner, property manager, or business representative for commercial properties.
- Subsequent violations: Temporary shut-off of irrigation service and assessment of a shut-off and restoration fee in accordance with the City's adopted Water Department fee schedule.

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Each day that a violation occurs constitutes a separate violation. However, the utility will generally aggregate violations into a single enforcement action administered within a customer's monthly billing cycle.

While the above steps will serve as the standard sequence, the framework also authorizes the Water Director or designee to bypass any or all progressive steps when a violation results in excessive or continuous water loss, unsafe or unsanitary conditions, or other circumstances posing a significant risk to public health, safety, or the City's water supply. In these cases, irrigation or water service may be immediately shut off, with notice of the action and the reason for shut-off provided to the customer as soon as practicable.

Following payment of assessed administrative fees and verification that the violation has been corrected, service will be restored within three working days. A hearing process remains available under existing ordinance provisions to contest administrative fees or enforcement actions.

This approach maintains the utility's commitment to consistency and fairness in enforcement while ensuring flexibility to address severe or wasteful conditions quickly and effectively. Staff will incorporate these updates into the forthcoming ordinance revisions to be presented to City Council.

To date, more than 500 commercial customers have reached the point of possible water shut-off due to ongoing violations despite administration of notifications and progressive administrative fees. Conservation staff have begun to directly engage with operations personnel at each non-compliant commercial location to discuss ordinance requirements in an effort to better understand the customer inaction and as a final effort to have customers effect change before shut-off. Staff have conducted more than 157 meetings with operations personnel. Of these, 105 have responded that they will correct deficiencies. The remainder have been non-responsive. If these outreach efforts are unsuccessful, the utility will proceed with the shut-off process for repeat offenders as outlined above.

**Planned Ordinance Updates**

Staff will bring proposed ordinance modifications forward to the City Council on November 11, 2025, to clarify the existing City Code and add further requirements by:

- Reorganizing City Code Section 35-155 entirely — replacing the former "Administrative Fee" section with a new section titled "Enforcement" to include the full scope of the enforcement framework to replace the prior reference to the three-step administrative fee structure and authorize emergency shutoff in situations threatening the utility or the public's health, safety, or welfare
- Renaming Section 35-157 as "Re-Establishment of Service to Locked or Shut Off Irrigation Systems or Meters" to require verification of corrective actions along with payment from the customer before the Water Director will unlock or turn on the irrigation system or meter.

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**SUBJECT: IRRIGATION ORDINANCE COMPLIANCE – 2025 UPDATE****Why It Matters**

Fort Worth's geography, rapid growth, and sole reliance on limited surface water supplies make conservation critical. Seasonal irrigation drives peak demand, strains infrastructure, and accelerates the need for costly expansions, which impact rates. Irrigation restrictions smooth out water demand, preventing sharp peaks that make it more difficult for the utility to serve customers reliably. Further, reducing per-capita water use is not only essential to local system reliability, but also a requirement within the Region C Water Plan and the State Water Plan, which call for 25% of future supply to come from conservation. Compliance with the existing and proposed ordinance revisions is necessary to realizing the goals set forth in the City Council-adopted 2024 Conservation Plan. Failure to achieve meaningful GPCD reductions undermines Fort Worth's credibility in regional and statewide planning discussions and risks future water supply allocations as well as state project financing opportunities.

Strict enforcement of the irrigation ordinance, paired with targeted ordinance updates, remains the most immediate, reliable, and cost-effective tool to manage demand and ensure Fort Worth is recognized as a responsible steward of its water resources.

Please contact Water Director Chris Harder at (817) 392-5020 with any questions.

**Jesus "Jay" Chapa**  
**City Manager**