



## **AB 1881 & You: New Irrigation Guidelines**

In January 2010, the state of California adopted new irrigation guidelines for construction landscapers and real estate developers. The Water Conservation in Landscaping Act of 2006 (Assembly Bill 1881, or AB 1881) supersedes 1990's Assembly Bill 235 and is designed to help California move forward as a leader in sustainable landscaping and water efficiency. Many commercial properties and apartment/condo communities currently use outdated irrigation technology; AB 1881 is a forward-thinking standard that prevents excessive or wasteful irrigation techniques by emphasizing the use of modern irrigation technology.

In most cases, this means implementing drip irrigation. Drip irrigation can keep water wastage to a minimum, especially in situations when traditional sprinkler heads break, often leading to small geysers of water. If the sprinkler is automated, it may not be visited often or it may be scheduled to start at a time when no one can see it. Because of this, the water wastage can continue unchecked for days, weeks, or even months. In addition to wasting water, this could flood the immediate landscape and create damage.

### **Here are the basic facts regarding AB 1881:**

-AB 1881 requires the use of modern irrigation technology (drip irrigation, smart controllers, etc.) to minimize wastage.

-AB 1881 is a state ordinance, though local cities, counties, and towns may have stricter requirements that supersede AB 1881.

-In general, AB 1881 applies to new construction and commercial landscapes.

-For developers working on private developments, government-sponsored projects, commercial/retail development, or apartment/condo communities, AB 1881 applies to gardens larger than 2,500 square feet.

-Almost all parkways must be irrigated without overspray.

### **Why is AB 1881 important to you?**

For developers and property management companies, it is important to understand how and why AB 1881 can impact their business. All irrigation systems must be designed and compliant with AB1881. Some of these specific guidelines include

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- Documentation on a landscape design plan.
- Low precipitation watering equipment for sloped terrain exceeding 25%.
- Rain, freeze, and wind sensors capable of deactivating irrigation during unfavorable weather conditions.
- Estimated total water usage that complies with maximum applied water allowance.

For complete guideline specifics, contact your local governing agency or qualified landscape management company.

Development and management companies have a good look at whether or not their projects/properties apply. If so, then the irrigation system must be audited by a certified landscape irrigation auditor for compliance following installation. Following the audit, you must submit the audit report with the Certificate of Completion to prove compliance. Penalties and enforcement are established by local agencies, and companies should also check to make sure that they understand the potential penalties are, along with whether or not they comply with enforcement guidelines.

Outside of the logistical hoops, AB 1881 offers some very practical benefits. Because it enforces a higher standard of water efficiency, any property using the AB 1881 guidelines will have lower water bills over the long-term. This can be a selling point to any end-buyer, be it for a commercial property or a single family home.

## **What you can do?**

The changeover in plans to drip irrigation can be done efficiently and swiftly with the proper planning and knowledge. By working with a landscaping company focused on sustainable landscaping and efficient irrigation, your company can easily find the best path to AB 1881 compliance. In addition, the right landscaping company can also direct your company to local and state rebates that can make the conversion process more cost-effective and beneficial. In short, proper planning and partnership with the right landscaping company can make this a smooth process that even comes with benefits for the developer.

## **FloraTerra can help**

FloraTerra is a Bay-Friendly certified landscape management and design firm serving the greater Bay Area. An expert on both irrigation technology and local flora, FloraTerra focuses on creating beautiful

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landscapes in an environmentally friendly and cost-effective manner. If you have questions about AB 1881 guidelines or compliance, FloraTerra can help. Contact FloraTerra at 800-455-0304 or visit our website at [www.floraterra.com](http://www.floraterra.com) .

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