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City Ready for the Future with Internet-based Irrigation System

Facing explosive growth and one of the worst droughts in U.S. history, Commerce City is nonetheless ready for the future, thanks to Rain Master's industry-leading iCentral Irrigation System

COMMERCE CITY, CO (July 20th, 2004) – Long overshadowed by the high-rises of Denver to the southwest, Commerce City suddenly finds itself in the spotlight as one of the fastest growing communities in the United States.

For many years, the quiet municipality was little more than an industrial enclave supporting its cosmopolitan neighbor. But just as in so many other urban areas in the American West, a relentless influx of new residents has resulted in huge demand for resources and space.

According to the Denver Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau, the entire region has seen population growth of almost 30% since 1990. With downtown real estate at a premium, new arrivals increasingly spread out on the prairie to the east as fast as new subdivisions can spring up to accommodate them.



For traditionally blue-collar Commerce City, that has meant a lot of changes. And as the city's zoning has shifted from industrial to residential, demand has risen for new parks and recreation facilities.

The responsibility for keeping those public spaces healthy and green falls on the shoulders of Tony Jaramillo, the Parks Superintendent. For Jaramillo, that means the careful management of one of the area's most precious resources: water. It also means using Rain Master's state-of-the-art irrigation systems.



"We started using Rain Master's Eagle controllers in May of 2003, bringing eight areas online," Jaramillo reports. "It's been a real life saver." The controllers have been upgraded with Rain Master's iCentral, allowing direct management of the entire system over the Internet.

Using any PC with Internet access, Jaramillo simply connects to the secure Rain Master iCentral website. From there, intuitive operations allow his irrigation programs to be effortlessly managed from his remote desktop location.

Even when away from the computer he is still aware of any unusual activity, thanks to the system's flow-sensing technology and real-time alerts. "We receive notification via cell phone," he explains, "allowing us to monitor our systems 24 hours a day."

"We get status updates, such as 'Power on,' as well as alarms indicating problems along any of the lines, like unscheduled flow, no flow, excessive flow, or even wiring faults," he says.

Instant awareness of problems helps Jaramillo's staff save time and money in maintenance costs. "We are able to print reports for our crews so they know where to look for problems and make repairs. They end up being more efficient and effective in the areas we have implemented iCentral."

Despite all of the advanced features available, Jaramillo finds the iCentral system nonetheless easy to implement and use on a daily basis. "The mounting and wiring of the controller is just like any other controller," he adds. "It's not hard to understand."

The Rain Master website also provides weather information, allowing for irrigation scheduling changes based on local atmospheric conditions. Use of evapo-transpiration (ET) data allows for the system to shut down when it starts to rain, for example, or when too much water will evaporate before it can soak into the ground.

"We are currently using ET adjustments from a weather station that is on the drop-down menu for our surrounding area," says Jaramillo. "We also recently ordered our own weather station from Rain Master that we expect to connect to our controllers in August of 2004." The new station would provide optimal, localized ET data for the best possible results.

And here in Commerce City, weather couldn't be more important. Because it is the gateway to many of Colorado's world-class ski resorts, the Denver region is often thought of as a wonderland of snow. However, despite the occasional winter airport closure the climate is actually dry to the extreme.

Located far from the ocean and in the rain shadow of the highest peaks in the Rockies, the Denver metro area averages less than 15 inches of precipitation per year while enjoying some 300 sunny days- just about the same rain as Los Angeles and more sun than either San Diego or Miami.

This means that even in a good year for rain, Commerce City has to rely almost exclusively on its irrigation systems to keep everything from turning brown. Unfortunately for Tony Jaramillo, that makes his job even harder because good years for rain have suddenly become very scarce.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the West is currently facing its worst drought in more than 400 years. Some scientists predict that the effects in the Colorado River Basin could be worse than during the Dust Bowl, with the river's current flow no more than half what it was then.

Although the Denver region is not technically part of the Colorado drainage (the river flows west out of the Rockies into Utah and Arizona) nonetheless communities like Commerce City are suffering during the drought as well.

In these types of conditions, accounting for every drop of water is crucial. "With iCentral's reports feature, we are able to get an accurate measure of our water usage, helping us develop our utility budget," Jaramillo explains. "The iCentral system is an effective tool to help us monitor water use in all of our areas."

"We also print irrigation schedule reports that we send to our water supplier. In the current drought conditions, we are under water rationing and this provides them with the documentation they need to ensure that we are complying with their guidelines."

Ironically, the high count of sunny days is one of the reasons more and more people keep moving to Commerce City. Each new subdivision is another collection of thirsty bathrooms, kitchens, and lawns, whose utilities access typically takes priority over parks and recreation.

Yet even with the population here projected to more than triple from the year 2000 to 2010, Jaramillo believes his department is ready. As additional parks continue to be built, the city plans to expand the iCentral installation right along with them. "We have specified the equipment as new parks are developed and feel that we have the capabilities to operate our irrigation systems very efficiently," Jaramillo says.

With that, Commerce City should be ready for the future, no matter how many people arrive.

About Rain Master

For over twenty-five years, Rain Master, based in Simi Valley, CA, has been the recognized innovative leader in the design and manufacture of irrigation controllers, handheld remote controls and central computerized control systems for the landscape and golf irrigation markets. Creator of *iCentral™*, the industry's first Web-based central control system, Rain Master sets the standard for technologically advanced, environmentally sensitive and cost effective irrigation control systems and water management. We consistently offer new technologies that exceed irrigation industry quality and performance standards for "SMART" ET-based irrigation control. Visit our website at www.rainmaster.com or e-mail info@rainmaster.com to learn more about our visionary solutions to water management through technology.

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