

City of Frisco Public Works

TEEA 2015 Winner: Water Conservation



Innovative WaterWise outreach simplifies water conservation message and saves billions of gallons.

Once a small city on the north side of Dallas, in the last 15 years Frisco has seen its population more than quadruple. During that time of rapid development, it also experienced the same challenge as many other cities in the area: drought.

Historical water use showed an enormous problem: nearly 300 gallons per person per day in 2000. Frisco's WaterWise campaign targeted residential water use, which accounted for 65 percent of total use throughout the city. With a constant influx of new residents, education was imperative.

Instead of focusing education on the residents' understanding of, and compliance with, the current drought-stage restrictions, Frisco decided just to simplify the message. Instead of answering "How much?" or "How often?" the city's water-education team turned the focus of their outreach to "Do we need to water at all?" In 2009, Frisco installed a weather station and set up rain gauges throughout the city. Using evapotranspiration methodology established by Texas A&M AgriLife researchers, the city captured and interpreted information based on data from the local area. What the team noticed was surprising—you don't need as much water as you might think. Based on that information, they began issuing weekly watering recommendations through newsletters, social media, city websites, and a phone hotline. Incorporating a science-based approach led to outstanding results: in 2014 Frisco made recommendations for its residents to water during just 12 weeks out of the year!

From the start, the priority was to remain consistent in the information provided. One-on-one contact and education through free sprinkler checkups has been a core component of the program. Residents could request a visit by one of the city's licensed irrigators to audit their sprinkler-system setup, review performance while it was in operation, make recommendations for more efficient settings, and then perform the adjustment for the homeowner. Sprinkler checkups have been an

incredibly popular opportunity for residents, with more than 14,000 completed since 2006. In addition to personal contact with the residents by the irrigators, Frisco's water education team regularly hosts workshops, develops and distributes educational materials, and films the weekly watering recommendations to supply up-to-date information for the city.

Through its proactive and focused approach to water conservation education, Frisco has seen consumption drop to 147 gallons per person per day and estimates its residents have saved 6.2 billion gallons in the most recent year because of WaterWise. By providing Frisco homeowners with accurate information to make informed decisions, the city allowed the individual to play a part in protecting a resource as precious as water for the betterment of future Texans.