

# SMARTLINK VS. CENTRAL CONTROL

FED UP WITH TRADITIONAL LIMITATIONS, CITY TURNS TO NEW TECHNOLOGY



## CITY OF MESQUITE, TEXAS

**Customer:** City of Mesquite Parks & Recreation Department

**Location:** Mesquite, Texas

**Manages:** 100+ sports fields, 1,600 acres of parkland, 72 miles of medians and right-of-ways

### CHALLENGE

With over 100 sports fields to maintain, plus 1600 acres of parkland and 72 miles of medians and right-of-ways, the City of Mesquite Parks Department has their work cut out for them when it comes to managing irrigation. The scenic city, a few minutes outside of Dallas, Texas, was previously run on an older Central Control system, but the excessive labor and continual problems associated with the system outweighed the benefits of having central control.

When installing central control using a hard phone line, it can be weeks of meeting and waiting before the contractor and the phone company can connect a phone line to the controller, depending on site limitations. Once the control was up and running, lightning and damaged phone lines were a constant concern. "You could easily drop one or two phone modems if the line got struck by lightning or if you got backfeed back into the controller." Manager

of Park Services, Travis Sales, pointed out. In addition to the extra labor such damage would require, "Phone modems are not cheap".

### THE WEATHERMATIC SOLUTION

Still, Sales was not looking for a new solution when he was introduced to Weathermatic. He has always been a strong supporter of Central Control and didn't intend to switch. But his mind was immediately changed when he experienced the difference the Weathermatic SmartLink Wireless Network made for his team.

**"With central control, yes everything is in one place, but it's in your office. So many times you get the call when you're not in the office. Now I can just handle it on my cell phone. That has made life so much easier. "**

"We had SmartLine controllers installed in the city, in various locations. When we got the update about SmartLink and the aircards, it took me longer to drive there than it did to install the controllers. It took maybe two to three minutes to set it

up on the computer. I immediately called my [Weathermatic] rep and said 'We have 23 more of these controllers out in the field; I need 23 more air cards.' The next day I retrofitted everything we had in the field that was stand-alone SmartLine to SmartLink." Sales and his team connected the SmartLink network to a total of 25 controllers and got them set up on the computer within two hours.

"That was the biggest thing that I really liked about it. Not only were the existing controllers already set up to accept the aircard, but the installation and set up on the computer was so simple. I was a little concerned at first because central control can be quite difficult until you learn it. [But this] is so simple."

Sales also loved that he could do it all from his cell phone. "With central control, yes everything is in one place, but it's in your office. So many times you get the call when you're not in the office. Now I can just handle it on my cell phone. That has made life so much easier."

### RESULT

Describing the difference between traditional central control, in terms of communication, expense, and complications, Sales says SmartLink provides a clear advantage. "From a budgetary standpoint,

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### CHALLENGE

- Large variety of irrigation needs
- Central Control system was working well but difficult to learn and install, labor intensive, not portable
- Central Control was expensive to purchase and maintain, plus constant concerns about lightning damage

### SOLUTION

- Connected SmartLink Wireless Network to the city's 25 existing SmartLine controllers with complete install and programming done in under 2 hours
- Install and setup was simple and quick, no learning curve
- Parks Manager could operate entire system from his smart phone

### RESULT

- City saves thousands on labor, repairs, travel, with 24/7 mobile access
- SmartLink system withstands lightning storms, provides valuable and timely reports



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a manpower standpoint: SmartLink is central control you have access to all the time. It's like having an irrigation tech on that site, 24 hours a day." He points out a SmartLink report he recently received for a shorted station: "It was out on a median and we inspect it once a week. With the weather we've been having and a little bit of light rain here lately, I got a report we had a short solenoid and we fixed it the next day. Without the SmartLink we wouldn't have known until the following week and by then we would have started yellowing out turf."

Since installing their new SmartLink system, Sales says "...we've had a couple of the worst lightning storms we've ever had and we did not lose a single controller, a single aircard; we did not lose communication. On hardline phone wiring, with contractors digging into things, breaking them, you get static on the line, the controller cannot communicate with central. With the new SmartLink, I can see

no negatives at this point." He adds, "The benefits are unbelievable. Once you've tried it and...you've run the controllers from your phone, you'll be sold. The amount of money and manpower you'll save is just unbelievable."

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