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# RESTARTING A NON-OPERATIONAL WATER FEATURE

By Leanne Harvey

**M**any communities and properties that turned off water features in the past few years due to current water conservation concerns have recently decided to restart them. However, before you move forward and flip the switch to get your fountain or other water feature running again, there's some extremely critical information you need to know to protect your investment from potentially costly damage — especially if your water feature has been shut off for an extended period of time.

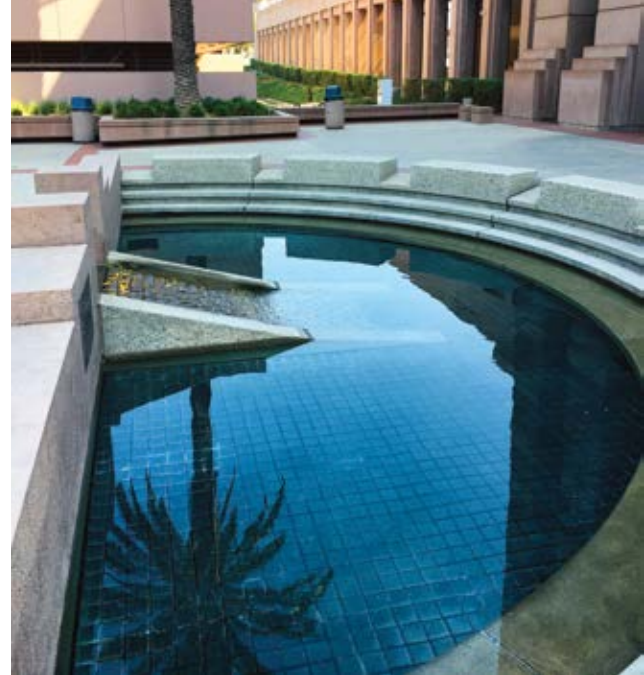
The first step you should take is to check all of the mechanical components of your water feature before turning it back on. Chances are, if your water feature has been left high and dry for any length of time, some, if not all of the mechanical components will need to be replaced. Please note that the Mechanical Systems generally consist of the following components:

## MECHANICAL SYSTEMS

- What to Check
- Pumps
- Light Fixtures
- Valves
- Unions
- Filters
- Cord Seals
- Flange Fittings
- Strainer Baskets

## What to Look For

Many mechanical components in water features use either a rubber seal, gasket or O-ring. The main purpose of these components is to prevent leakage. When a water feature has been turned off for a protracted period of time, these components will have likely dried, becoming brittle and cracked, making it critical to



replace them before restarting the water feature. Failure to incur the minimal expense of replacing a brittle or cracked O-ring or gasket may result in substantial water damage and repair costs.

After a period of disuse, motor bearings are likely to seize up when you restart the motor. This in turn can cause the pump to lock up and become damaged. Repair or replacement can cost thousands of dollars if that occurs. Make sure to check for corrosion on the pump impellers prior to starting the motor as this can also cause the pump to seize.

If the valve seal has cracked (and chances are, it has) then the valve won't close properly. So be sure to check this as well and always replace as necessary.

When was the last time you took a look inside your electrical panel and control box? If you do take a look, you might find problems that require immediate attention. Without a ventilation fan running in that confined and humid space, you'll probably find significant corrosion that can lead to short-circuiting.

If your water feature uses an automated chemical feeding system, be sure to check that. Metering pumps, solenoid valves, tubes and fittings — along with rubber seals — will have all likely corroded over time and need replacing. Replacement of these components will help to keep the feeding system working well and keep other maintenance costs low.

Drain any standing water that has collected in your water feature prior to turning it back on. In fact, it is highly recommended that you perform this function at all times when your feature is off.

## ARCHITECTURAL FINISHES

### What to Look For

Be sure to thoroughly check finishes for any cracks, damage or weaknesses before restarting a water feature.

With long-term exposure, the plaster in a dry water feature eventually begins to crack and break away from the structure, weakening the structure and leading to costly repairs if not addressed before turning the water feature back on.

Many water features are built with waterproofing membranes for added protection. When exposed to dry air, the membranes crack and degrade. This in turn causes tile and other finishes to delaminate and pop off.

Water features can delight, engage, soothe and entertain. However, when the water feature is drained and left exposed for any length of time, water feature repairs can also be costly. Restarting a water feature after a long period of non-use may lead to extremely expensive repairs if you don't take the proper precautions and restart it properly. Having a professional check and repair key elements of your water feature before you turn it back on is a smart way to save time, money and ensure the full enjoyment of your water feature for many years to come. 🏰



Leanne Harvey is the Director of Business Development at California Waters which is located in Yorba Linda, California and serves communities located throughout all of Southern California.

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