Orchard Tech
ABN 16 102 266 894
PO Box 755 ROBINVALE VIC 3549
e: hari@orchardtech.com.au m: 0439 32 32 32 o: 03 9332 3232

Irrigation system operation and schedule changes on an almond farm

What to expect before you start

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This sheet describes typical irrigation system operation and schedule change work and conditions. Your actual duties depend on the farm and what you are trained and authorised to do. Reading this sheet does not authorise you to operate irrigation equipment, change a watering schedule, drive a farm vehicle or repair equipment.

Who you work for

Orchard Tech is your employer. Your host farm (your host) directs your daily work. Both are responsible for your health and safety. Raise questions or safety concerns with your supervisor or Orchard Tech: Hari Yellina, 0439 32 32 32, or Soana Fanua, 0400 174 471.

Your working hours

Your confirmed roster sets your days, hours and breaks. Ask your supervisor if you are unsure.

The work you may do

Irrigation system operation means turning the water on and off to blocks of trees. A watering schedule is the plan for when, and for how long, each block gets water. Your host makes the decisions about irrigation and water use. You make only the changes your host tells you to make.

Operating the system. You may open or close valves, start or stop pumps, or use an irrigation controller (the equipment or computer program that turns the water on and off at set times). Use equipment only after your host has trained you, checked that you can use it safely, and authorised you to use it. This also applies to changing schedules. Always use equipment in the way your host has shown you. Do not change any other setting.

Changing a schedule. Change a watering schedule only when your host tells you to. Make only the change you were told to make, in the way you were shown. If an instruction is unclear, or does not match what you see, do not guess. Ask your supervisor before you change anything.

Safety checks. Before operating equipment, do the safety checks your host has taught you. If you are unsure whether it is safe, do not start. Ask your supervisor.

Checking and recording. After you turn water on or off, or change a schedule, check the system in the way your host has shown you. Look for leaks, burst or disconnected pipe, very wet or dry patches and anything that does not look right. If shown how, you may also read gauges or meters. Your host will tell you which checks and changes to record and when to report them. Record only what you actually saw, read or changed. If you find a problem, report what you saw, where (block and row) and when.

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Faults and alarms. If a controller shows an alarm or fault, or a pump, valve or filter does not work as expected, stop work and keep clear of the equipment. Do not try to fix it. Tell your supervisor straight away and follow their instructions.

Fertiliser or chemicals in the water. Some farms add fertiliser or chemicals to the irrigation water. This is a separate task. Do not touch fertiliser or chemical injection equipment unless that work is part of your confirmed job and you are trained and authorised for it.

This sheet covers operating the irrigation system as your host directs. Repairs and maintenance (including pump repairs), electrical work, fertiliser or chemical work, driving and operating other machinery are separate tasks. They need their own instructions, training and authorisation. Use only the electrical switches and controls your host has shown you. Never open electrical covers or do electrical work. Electrical work is for qualified electricians. Never enter dams, channels or tanks.

Tools and materials

Your host will give you what you need, such as a radio or phone, a farm map or block list, and a form, notebook or approved app. Use only the tools and equipment your host gives you, as you were shown. Report anything that is damaged or not working.

Pumps, valves and water under pressure

A controller may start a pump or open a valve on its own, at set times. The water in irrigation pipes is under pressure, and it may contain fertiliser or chemicals.

- **Before you start,** ask your supervisor whether fertiliser or chemicals are in the water. If this is unclear, do not start. Wear the eye protection and gloves your host provides.
- **Moving parts:** keep your hands, hair and loose clothing away from the moving parts of pumps and motors. Never remove or bypass a guard. Your host will show you any hot parts and noisy areas and tell you what protection to use.
- **Locks and tags:** when equipment must be made safe for work, an authorised person does this using the host's procedure. Your host will show you the safety locks and warning tags used on the farm. Never start, open or use equipment protected by a safety lock or a tag warning you not to use it. Never remove these locks or tags.
- **Electrical safety:** do not touch or work near damaged electrical equipment or exposed wiring. Keep clear and tell your supervisor straight away.
- **Stop and tell your supervisor** if a pipe bursts, a fitting comes off, water sprays where it should not, or a valve will not open or close. Do not force it. Keep yourself and others out of the path of the water. If water splashes into your eyes or onto your skin, stop and get first aid straight away.
- **Near dams and channels,** keep back from the edge. Never enter dams, channels or tanks.

Working on your own

If you work on your own or in remote parts of the farm, make sure your supervisor knows where you will be. Do not work alone in a remote area unless your supervisor has approved it. Carry the radio or phone your host provides and check in as agreed.

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Working near machines

Tractors, sprayers, harvest machines and other vehicles may be working in or near your block.

- **Keep separate from machines.** Before you start, ask your host to show you where to work and how workers are kept away from machinery. If a machine comes into your work area, stop work, keep clear and tell your supervisor. Keep well away from trees being shaken: branches and nuts can fall.
- **Never approach a working machine** until the operator has stopped and clearly signalled you to come closer. Eye contact alone is not enough.
- **Be seen:** wear the high-visibility clothing your host provides, and watch for vehicles coming out of rows and turning at the headlands (the turning areas at the ends of the rows).

Weather and the outdoors

Most work is outdoors in heat, cold, wind, rain and dust. Watch for holes, pipes, slippery ground and snakes. Work may change or stop in heat, storms or smoke: follow your host's instructions. Use sun protection all year (broad-brim hat, long sleeves, sunglasses, sunscreen), drink water often, take shade breaks and dress for the weather. Tell your supervisor straight away if you or a co-worker feel sick, dizzy or very hot.

- **Do not enter a block that is being sprayed or has a no-entry sign. Do not drink irrigation water:** it may contain fertiliser or chemicals.
- **Wet ground:** ground near drippers, leaks and pooling water can be muddy and slippery. Walk carefully and watch where you put your feet.
- **Snakes and spiders** may hide in long grass, near water pipes and in shaded areas. Look carefully before you kneel, reach or put your hand near a valve or other equipment.

Movement and lifting

You may need to walk on uneven ground. You may need to bend, kneel or reach to open and close valves. If a valve or handle is hard to turn, do not force it. Tell your supervisor. If lifting or carrying feels unsafe, ask for help or use the equipment provided. Report pain or discomfort early.

Moving around the farm safely

Mule or similar farm vehicle

Some farms use a side-by-side vehicle, such as a Kawasaki MULE, to carry workers and materials.

- **Driving is not covered by this sheet.** If driving is part of your confirmed job, get the safe work instructions, training and authorisation for that vehicle first. A licence alone does not show you can drive it safely.
- **Driver and passengers:** wear your seat belt every time, and the helmet and eye protection your host provides (your host will tell you what to wear). Keep doors or nets closed and arms and legs inside. Sit only in a seat with a seat belt. Never ride in the tray or bypass a safety device.

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Farm traffic rules

- **Follow the farm traffic plan:** use set routes, obey signs and speed limits, and keep away from steep slopes, banks and water.
- **On foot:** use walking routes and keep clear of moving machinery. Stop in a safe place before using a phone or writing records.

PPE and help on the farm

Your host will provide the personal protective equipment (PPE) for your tasks and show you how to wear, check and look after it. This may include safety boots, high-visibility clothing, gloves, eye or hearing protection, sun protection and a vehicle helmet. Report missing, damaged or poorly fitting PPE before you start. PPE does not replace training, instructions or other safety controls.

At induction, learn who your supervisor is, where water, toilets and first aid are, the emergency plan, how to get help where there is no phone coverage, and the check-in arrangements when you work alone.

- In a life-threatening emergency, call Triple Zero (000), then tell your supervisor. If you see a snake, keep clear and never try to catch or kill it. If a snake bites you, or you think you have been bitten, keep as still as possible and call 000 or ask someone to call.
- Report every injury, near miss or unsafe situation to your supervisor and Orchard Tech as soon as possible, even if it seems small.
- Ask for a demonstration, an explanation or language help whenever you do not understand.

Important note before starting any job

This sheet describes typical irrigation system operation and schedule change work. Before you start, your host will give you the job description and safe work instructions for your actual duties, the PPE you need, a farm induction and training for your tasks. Follow those instructions. Do not do any work without the required PPE, training and authorisation. Complete the induction at every new farm, and get the instructions and training for every new task. **If anything is missing, unsafe or unclear, stop and ask your supervisor. You can also contact Orchard Tech.**