

CITY OF PALM DESERT STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: April 24, 2025

PREPARED BY: Pedro Rodriguez, Code Compliance Supervisor

SUBJECT: STUDY SESSION: LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE AND CONSTRUCTION
START TIMES.

RECOMMENDATION:

Provide feedback on addressing code inconsistencies for landscape maintenance and construction start times.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

Current Issue

The Palm Desert Municipal Code (PDMC) establishes different start times across various sections for the following type of activities:

- Construction work
- Private property maintenance activities
- Golf course maintenance
- City-owned property maintenance

These inconsistencies create enforcement challenges, particularly when similar activities—such as landscape maintenance—are subject to different regulations based solely on the location or the party performing the work. For example, a private landscape contractor may be restricted to a 9:00 AM start, while a City landscape contractor or construction project nearby may begin as early as 7:00 AM.

This has led to increased complaints and confusion from both residents and contractors. Additionally, Code Compliance staff have experienced challenges in applying and explaining these inconsistent standards during enforcement and outreach efforts. Property maintenance, which includes landscape maintenance, is regulated by PDMC Section 9.24.075. The table below outlines the current regulations and illustrates the inconsistencies across activity types.

Table 1 – PDMC Construction and Maintenance Hours

	Construction Activity	Property Maintenance*	Parking Lot Sweeper
October 1st through April 30th			
Monday - Friday:	7:00 AM – 5:30 PM	9:00 AM – 5:30 AM	7:01 AM – 9:59 PM
Saturday:	8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	9:00 AM – 5:30 AM	
Sunday:	None	9:00 AM – 5:30 AM	
Government code holidays:	None	Not Allowed	

City of Palm Desert
Property Maintenance Start Times

May 1st through September 30th			
Monday - Friday:	5:30 AM – 7:00 PM	8:00 AM – 5:30 PM	7:01 AM – 9:59 PM
Saturday:	8:00 AM – 5:00 PM	9:00 AM – 5:30 AM	
Sunday:	None	9:00 AM – 5:30 AM	
Government code holidays:	None	Not Allowed	
		*Golf Courses & Tennis Courts: 5:30 AM – 7:00 PM, 7-days a week. Blowers must operate at the hours listed above	

Resident Complaints & Code Compliance Efforts

Since October 1, 2024, Code Compliance staff have received approximately twenty (20) complaints regarding landscape contractors starting work before permitted hours. Notably, complaints were mostly related to non-permitted start times rather than noise levels.

To address these concerns, Code Compliance staff conducted early morning enforcement and educational efforts in January and February 2025, engaging approximately 30 landscape contractors. A recurring issue raised by crews was the inconsistency in regulations; private landscape contractors had to wait until 9:00 AM to begin work, while City crews were exempt and able to start at 7:00 AM. This included performing the same type of maintenance across the street between the hours of 7:00 AM and 9:00 AM. Additionally, construction activity was also occurring during that timeframe as permitted by Section 9.24.070.

As a result of this enforcement and outreach efforts, staff also began receiving complaints regarding the delayed start times, from both residents and contractors, highlighting the need for consistent regulatory enforcement.

Considerations

Several factors warrant reconsideration of current start times:

- **Consistency & Fairness:** The discrepancy between private and city landscape maintenance causes confusion and frustration among workers and business owners.
- **Work Hours & Seasonal Adjustments:** Landscape workers prefer starting around 7:00 AM when daylight allows, particularly in cooler months.
- **Heat Illness Prevention:** The California Department of Industrial Relations mandates heat illness prevention measures for outdoor workers. Allowing earlier start times will help workers avoid extreme temperatures and reduce health risks.
- **Business & Residential Needs:** Standardized start times for property maintenance, similar to those for construction and city landscape contractors, would benefit business owners and residents alike.
- **Streamline process for City staff:** Code enforcements would have a streamlined and clearer process to deal with resident complaints on activity.

Survey of Adjacent Cities

Table 2 below provides a summary of Property Maintenance start times for other Coachella Valley cities, which all have aligned start times.

Table 2 – Coachella Valley cities maintenance start times

City	Property Maintenance Start Times
Rancho Mirage	Monday – Friday: 7:00 am – 6:00 pm Weekends not permitted
Indian Wells	Monday – Friday: 7:00 am – 5:00 pm Weekends not permitted
Cathedral City	Residential: 8:00 am – 8:00 pm Commercial: 7:00 am – 8:00 pm
Palm Springs	Residential: 8:00 am – 8:00 pm Commercial: 7:00 am – 8:00 pm
La Quinta	October 1 through April 30: 7:00 am – 5:30 pm May 1 through September 30: 6:00 am – 7:00 pm

Request

Staff is seeking feedback from the City Council on whether Palm Desert Municipal Code (PDMC) Section 9.24.075 (Property Maintenance) should be amended to align with the permitted start times outlined in PDMC Section 9.24.070 (Construction Activities).

Legal Review:

This report has been reviewed by the City Attorney's Office.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact related to this action.

ATTACHMENTS:

Presentation will be provided prior to the meeting as supplemental material.