

Phone in your order for irrigation control

by David C. Harmon

Listen up! Those of you with automatic irrigation systems can now control the on/off switch of your master control units remotely by the simple use of a touch-tone telephone.

In 1973 the Golden Horseshoe Golf Course installed a BINAR automatic electric irrigation system for the purpose of saving water, electricity, and manpower. The system has done all that has been asked of it with the exception of turning itself off during rain and/or electrical storms. Having an electric irrigation system operating during an electrical storm can cause extensive damage to certain key electrical components. Many storms of this type seem to occur with little advance warning, usually after you and your employees have gone home for the day. Since I am the person responsible for the operation of our system, I began to search for a way to overcome this one major drawback.

My first desire was to have the ability to shut the system down if it were operating during a simple rain storm. After being told that a rain omit switch would do the job for me, I contacted my local irrigation supply house for specific information. They told me that a Rain-Stat by Weathermatic was available for approximately \$40 and would accomplish my specific requirements. This switch, in conjunction with a relay, is wired to the incoming a.c. electric supply. I have the rain omit switch set so that after .25 inch of rain, the relay interrupts the a.c. power to the BINAR master control units. This relay and switch combination keeps the system off until the rain evaporates from the rain omit switch or is manually dumped.

The rain omit switch has worked fine, but I found that in many cases lightning precedes the advancing rain, and lightning is what causes the real damage to an electric irrigation

system in operation. After talking to several people about this problem and having to leave a warm bed at 2:00 in the morning several times to shut down the irrigation system, I was told to call my local phone company. I discussed my problem with a phone company engineer and was told that with the help of a touch-tone telephone, several relays, amplifiers, and other miscellaneous phone equipment, I could control the on/off switch to the BINAR control units.

I now have the capability of turning the irrigation system on or off by telephone without ever having to go to the office. Amen!

says this is their first request and first installation of its kind on a golf course.

There was no charge for the installation of the phone equipment, but there is a \$30 monthly charge for rental of the equipment. This is very reasonable compared to the replacement costs of ten BINAR decoders or a half-dozen electric solenoids which could be damaged during a severe thunderstorm.

With automatic irrigation systems now costing between \$150,000 and \$250,000, any protection for your equipment would certainly make sense. The mentioned phone equipment will work with any brand of



How it works

The phone company has designed the system so that when I call the number of the phone which is located in my office where the BINAR master control units are located, I hear one tone that tells me that the system is on and another tone that tells me if it is off.

If the system is on and I wish to turn it off, I press one preselected number on the touch-tone phone. If the system is off and I wish to turn it on, I press a different preselected number on the phone. The system thus reacts to your very wishes from wherever you might be, as long as you are using a touch-tone phone. It seems so simple, but the phone company

irrigation control units or pumps. For information on obtaining the phone system, contact your local phone company or feel free to write to me c/o Golden Horseshoe GC, 404 S. England St., Williamsburg, VA 23185. □

Dave Harmon is superintendent at the Golden Horseshoe Golf Course in Williamsburg, Va. He has been a member of the GOLF BUSINESS Advisory Board since its inception in 1976 and has been active in the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and the Old Dominion GCSA for many years.