



**DENVER**<sup>®</sup>  
THE MILE HIGH CITY

**City and County of Denver**  
Parks and Recreation

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Work Continues on Electric Fountain in City Park 100 Year Old Fountain Struck by Lightning

**DENVER, CO — July 16, 2009** — The Darlington Prismatic Electric Fountain, built in 1908 for the first Democratic National Convention in Denver and reconstructed last year, was hit by lightning on Friday, June 26. After assessing the damage, it has been determined that the fountain can be repaired, but that replacement parts needed from overseas will prevent the fountain from doing any more light shows for the remainder of the summer. Water shows will resume as soon as possible.

Approximately 84 LED lights were damaged in the strike, which will need to be purchased and shipped from Germany. Because there is a 10-12 week lead time on getting the replacement lights, evening light shows will not be possible for the remainder of the summer.

### Fountain History

The original fountain was supported by Mayor Robert Speer's City Beautiful plan and the Democratic National Convention coming to Denver during the summer of 1908. The fountain was a centerpiece of life in Denver, drawing thousands of visitors to watch the water and light shows while listening to concerts in City Park. The fountain, which predates the Disney and Las Vegas era of show fountains by over sixty years, was created by engineer Frederic W. Darlington. It was called the Prismatic Electric Fountain because of the rainbow of colored lighting effects created by the special apparatus patented by Darlington in the late 1890's.

Toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, necessary repairs became too frequent and the fountain shows were discontinued. After multiple attempted repairs, the deteriorating fountain was torn down and a 20-month project to build a historically accurate replica of the original fountain began in January 2007. The original Darlington Electric Fountain in City Park was the last known surviving, relatively intact example of Darlington's work when it was demolished. Denver is the only city with a Darlington Electric Fountain to undertake the daunting task of creating a historically accurate yet modern version of his original work.

The new Electric Fountain vault was designed to match the dimensions of the original fountain based on measurements taken before the demolition. The new fountain vault is constructed with re-bar and a special mix of concrete for strength. The new fountain features the 12 water display effects of the original fountain, but there are now three times as many automatic valves to give dramatic new flexibility in controlling the displays.

The new fountain, constructed at a cost of \$3.2 million, is run by computer software. In keeping with Denver's greener image, the fountain uses LED lights that consume about 80 percent less

energy than incandescent lighting would require. . These state-of-the-art lights are saving over 40,000 Watts of power during the peak demand point of a fountain show.

The fountain recycles between 600 and 4,000 gallons of Ferril Lake water per minute, depending on which water features are active and how high they shoot. The center geyser is designed to shoot to a height of 90 feet. Along with providing visual entertainment, operation of the fountain also aerates the lake water, which reduces algae growth and is good for the fish stocked in the lake.

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