

# Safety first!

*Peter Wisbey is the chairman of EIGGA and course manager at North Foreland GC, Kent. This article is based on the Health And Safety At Work Act, 1974 and formed the basis of a highly acclaimed paper delivered by Peter at Golf Course '84.*

The Act, in its present form, seems to overlook the golf club, or so many clubs seem to think. But does it? How does it affect golf clubs and greenstaff?

Under section 2 (3) of the Health And Safety At Work Act, 1974 it is the duty of any employer with five or more staff, whether full-time or not, to prepare and display a policy statement setting out in detail safety standards applicable to their business. This figure of five includes clubhouse staff, cleaners and caddies, as well as the greenstaff. Failure to meet this requirement is subject to a maximum fine of £1,000.

Who is responsible for the health and safety of the greenstaff? In a private club with directors, it is the chairman of the board. If, however, it is a members' club, then the responsibility falls on the captain to ensure that conditions and work practices conform with the 1974 act. It then falls to the delegated head of department, in this case the head greenkeeper/course manager, to prepare and implement a policy statement.

The first and most important thing to ensure is that a policy statement is available to all staff. A copy should be displayed in a prominent position in, say, the mess room or workshop. This statement (required by law) can be on guidelines laid down by the Health And Safety Executive (Agriculture).

It should consist of a general statement laying out:

- 1) Employer's responsibilities.
- 2) Employees' responsibilities.

It would then detail the arrangements and procedures for such things as: a) servicing machines and reporting faults, etc; b) safety training; c) protective clothing; d) special care (under this heading, the club must detail any specific hazards—i.e. steep slopes, overhead or buried pipes, cables, etc, use of dangerous substances or machinery),

e) fire hazards, naming the areas where smoking is forbidden.

The final part of the statement should give procedures in case of emergency, giving locations of first-aid equipment and also reminding staff to report *all* accidents and to enter them in an accident book (required by law).

Under a paragraph headed Task Restrictions, a statement should make it clear that no employee will be asked or expected to undertake work for which he/she is not experienced or trained. This statement must be signed by the employer—i.e. captain and/or the delegated head of department.

In agriculture, the law regarding the fitting of such things as pto covers and tractor safety frames is clear. They must be fitted.

On the golf course, however, tractors, etc, need not comply with these regulations and the Health and Safety Executive can only suggest they be fitted.

The same applies to safety clothing, such as spray suits, gloves, masks, goggles, ear protection and non-slip safety (steel-toed) boots. Often greenkeepers have told me that these things are not provided because golf clubs are exempt from the act. They are not! In the Policy Statement, two paragraphs read:

Employer's responsibilities a) to provide and maintain equipment, machinery and systems of work, which are safe and without risk to health, e) to provide a working environment without risk to health and safety and adequate facilities and arrangements for their welfare at work.

Therefore, in the event of mishap or accident an inquiry or inquest would require the club to provide good reasons why good safety arrangements were not made. Expense is not a good reason. The Act does require that adequate mess

facilities be maintained—i.e., heat, toilet and washing facilities with soap and towel.

I would also expect clubs in this day and age to provide a small cooking area, shower cubicle and drying room. These things can only improve staff morale, which will undoubtedly reflect on the condition of the course.

Many courses like mine are split by public highways. As part of the daily routine, machines, such as tractors, Cushman and triplex mowers, cross and recross such roads. Clubs are allowed up to six miles per week without an excise licence (for each machine), but the Vehicle Licensing Department at Swansea must have details of each machine (serial number, make, etc (and an exemption disc applied for and displayed).

Storage of chemicals, sprays and the like should always be in a secure place, designed to contain them in the event of spillage, leakage or fire. The store should be situated away from drains and open watercourses. It is a good idea to notify the local fire authorities of the nature of chemicals and pesticides in use.

The store should be built of non-combustible materials, with a light roof to act as a vent in the case of fire. Good ventilation is essential. It is a good idea to have a raised, slatted floor to provide a sump and the raised threshold facilitates the unloading of drums, etc.

Fungicides should be kept on shelves, while 25 litre drums should be carefully stacked on the floor.

If at all possible, do not interstack different products. Keep a bag of sawdust handy to soak up spillage. The door must be lockable and kept locked when not in use.

When a new product is brought into use, the head greenkeeper will obtain copies of data sheets for members of staff, give proper training in its use

*Continued overleaf...*

## Safety first—Continued...

and make sure protective clothing and equipment is supplied and used.

The storage and handling of petrol affects all golf clubs. Few clubs seem to follow the letter of the law as far as the purchase and storage of this highly dangerous liquid goes. A few more enlightened clubs have installed underground bulk tanks with electric pumps, which gives them a safe, convenient supply bought in at bulk prices. Most, however, rely on odd cans dotted around and in some cases filled daily (in summer) at a nearby garage.

How does the law stand with regard to petrol? If a bulk tank is not installed then the maximum amount you can store without a licence and for *immediate* use is 60 gallons in an approved store (such as described for chemicals) and in two gallon cans only. Drums or jerry cans *will not* do. Also, you must notify your local Petroleum Officer of your intention to store petrol on your premises. Warning signs should be displayed on the store and fire extinguishers provided.

Another common occurrence at golf clubs is that a member of the greenstaff, usually the head greenkeeper, fetches the petrol in his car or, in some cases, the club's vehicle. Again, the law here is very clear—no more than ten gallons in not more than two gallon cans. The vehicle must display the inflammable diamond and carry a fire extinguisher.

### Insurance

Most important of all, though, make sure your car insurance covers you, especially if you are using a private car. Insurance is the key to all these regulations, for if an accident does occur and you have not notified the authorities that petrol is being stored, and it is not stored in a safe and proper manner, the club may well find its insurance cover void.

A bulk tank of 1,000 gallons capacity with garage-type pump will cost around £4,000 to install, with a licence fee of £25 per annum.

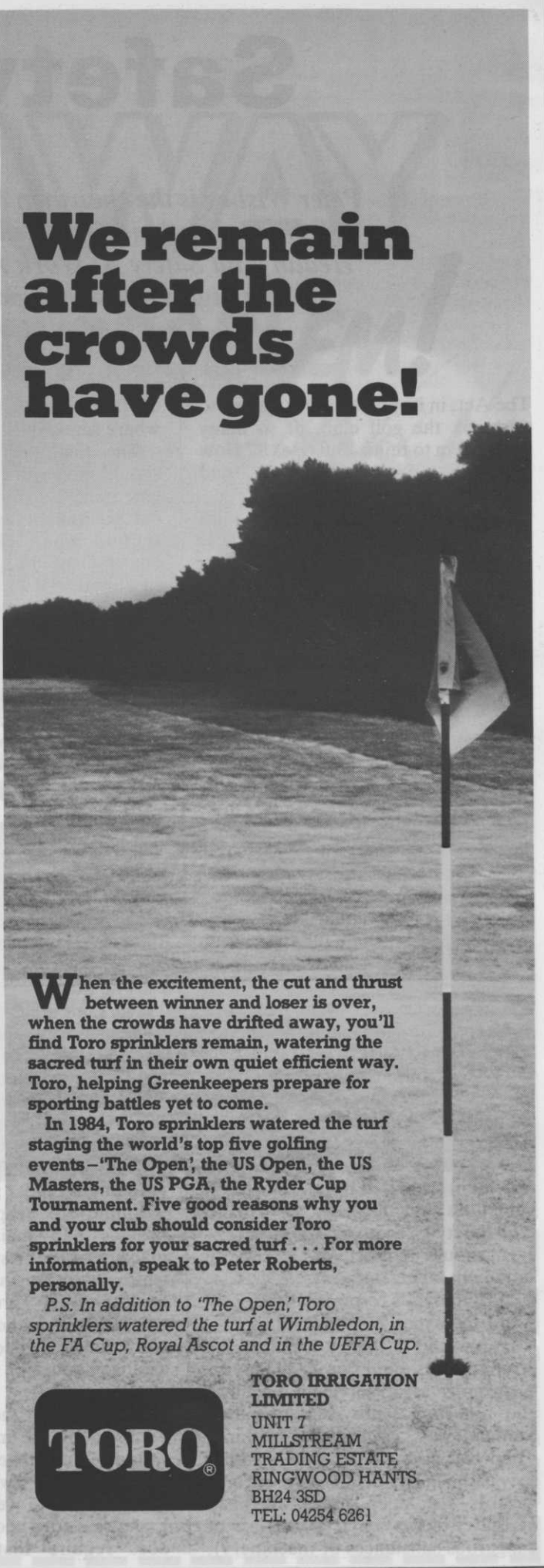
To conclude, it is in the interests of the golf club committees and staff to have a good look at work procedures. At most clubs, a few hundred pounds spent on improving safety standards could save a lot more in the long run. Head greenkeepers and course managers should be aware that, in certain cases, *they* can be prosecuted if the Health And Safety Act is not adhered to. I know of at least one case where this happened. The greenkeeper was found guilty of negligence and had to pay costs. So, be warned.

The Policy Statement must be drawn to the attention of *all* staff, whether trainees, part-time or casual. It is a good idea to get them to sign the statement, stating they have read and understood it.

I have found both the Health and Safety Executive and the Petroleum Officer extremely helpful and informative. In both cases, they have said that it is the policy to prosecute only as a last resort and are willing to carry out advisory visits and make recommendations. These visits cost nothing and could save a lot of money or, more importantly, lives. Put safety *first*.

**Greenkeeper  
has a new phone number  
0255 507526**

# We remain after the crowds have gone!



**W**hen the excitement, the cut and thrust between winner and loser is over, when the crowds have drifted away, you'll find Toro sprinklers remain, watering the sacred turf in their own quiet efficient way. Toro, helping Greenkeepers prepare for sporting battles yet to come.

In 1984, Toro sprinklers watered the turf staging the world's top five golfing events—'The Open', the US Open, the US Masters, the US PGA, the Ryder Cup Tournament. Five good reasons why you and your club should consider Toro sprinklers for your sacred turf . . . For more information, speak to Peter Roberts, personally.

*P.S. In addition to 'The Open', Toro sprinklers watered the turf at Wimbledon, in the FA Cup, Royal Ascot and in the UEFA Cup.*



**TORO IRRIGATION  
LIMITED**  
UNIT 7  
MILLSTREAM  
TRADING ESTATE  
RINGWOOD HANTS  
BH24 3SD  
TEL: 04254 6261