

## Control of substances hazardous to health (C.O.S.H.H.) regulations

*Continued from November Issue.*

A more recent piece of legislation, has come into operation on the 1 October 1989 - the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations. This legislation lays down the essential requirements and a sensible step-by-step approach for the control of substances harmful to health and for protecting people exposed to them. The Regulations set out essential measures that employers and employees have to take.

Detailed information can be obtained about the legislation from HSE Offices and several free leaflets are available on the subject. Generally the basic principles of occupational hygiene are incorporated in the Regulations and briefly these require an assessment of the risk to health arising from work, introducing appropriate measures to prevent or control the risk, ensuring control measures are used and that equipment is properly maintained, monitoring the exposure of workers where it is necessary, carrying out appropriate forms of health surveillance again where it is necessary and informing, instructing and training employees about the risks and the precautions to be taken.

Compliance with the Regulations begins with the essential requirement for all employers to make an assessment of all harmful substances used in the business. With Golf Clubs this will probably mean pesticides and include substances such as dust, welding fumes, degreasing fluids, solvents, adhesives, cleaning fluids, disinfectants, paints etc. **THESE ASSESSMENTS HAVE TO BE MADE BETWEEN NOW AND THE 1 JANUARY 1990.** The responsibility for making this assessment rests with the employer who could carry-out the assessment himself, or delegate the task to someone else competent to get all the necessary information and make correct decisions about

the risks and suggest adequate precautions.

With many substances used in Golf Clubs, it should be sufficient to follow the instructions for safe use given on the product label. Golf Clubs should carry out a survey of all substances used and where there is uncertainty about any particular substance, they should obtain information from the supplier on its safe use. If the substance is considered to be particularly dangerous, the Club should consider, as part of their assessment under COSHH, replacing that substance with a safer alternative. Employees must be given information on the risk from these substances and instructed and trained on the safe use, handling and storage.

Harmful micro-organisms are also covered by COSHH and employees should be encouraged to obtain immunisation against tetanus (lockjaw) whose spores can be present in soil or dirt.

### ASSESS before Jan 1st

The important first task is to carry out the assessment of the hazard before 1 January 1990 and introduce sensible work practices and precautions to protect those affected by the legislation.

Your Association is a member of the National Turfgrass Council who have in conjunction with the National Association of Agricultural Contractors prepared and published a Code of practice for the use of Approved pesticides in Amenity Areas. The Code is not approved as statutory guidance, but provides useful guidance to all Golf Club committees and greenkeepers on the safe use of pesticides and chemicals.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has enforcement responsibility for large events such as the Ryder Cup and the various professional tournaments. Clubs which provide facilities for these events are advised to get in touch with the

local Principal Agricultural Inspector of the HSE as early as possible in the planning of the event so that appropriate health and safety arrangements can be incorporated in the initial planning. Whilst the legal responsibility remains with the organisers, appropriate advice from Inspectors can reduce the risk to players or the public present at the event.

Much of the legislative requirements relating to health and safety matters is no more than good common sense and the use of safe working practices. Remember that the greenkeeping staff and other employees in a Golf Club are in the best position to identify any health and safety problem and to bring it to the attention of their employers. Employers are required to give proper instruction and training in the use of the wide range of machinery

found on golf courses. Skill can be improved by training and experience. Where a particular machine, eg a chain saw, is used on rare occasions, it is probably preferable to hire an experienced chain saw operator to carry out the task rather than have to purchase the full protective clothing and arrange training for one member of the greenkeeping staff.

Health and Safety Inspectors are always willing to give help and advice to Golf Club committees and their greenkeeping staff. Contact the local HSE office if you have a particular problem. HSE's Agricultural Inspectorate produce a large number of free publications relating to the safe use of machinery and pesticides used on farms and most of that information can be helpful to anyone involved in the maintenance of golf courses and other amenity areas.

### WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

*Your employer has a duty under the law to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, your health, safety and welfare at work.*

*In general your employer's duties include:*

- making your workplace safe and without risks to health;
- keeping dust, fume and noise under control;
- ensuring plant and machinery are safe and that safe systems of work are set and followed;
- ensuring articles and substances are moved, stored and used safely;
- providing adequate welfare facilities;
- giving you the information, instruction, training and supervision necessary for your health and safety.

*Your employer must also:*

- draw up a health and safety policy statement if there are 5 or more employees, including the health and safety organisation and arrangements in force, and bring it to your attention;
- provide free, any protective clothing or equipment specifically required by health and safety law;
- report certain injuries, disease and dangerous occurrences to the enforcing authority;
- provide adequate first-aid facilities;
- consult a safety representative, if one is appointed by a recognised trade union, about matters affecting your health and safety;
- set up a safety committee if asked in writing by 2 or more safety representatives;
- provide, maintain and keep clean washing and toilet facilities and accommodation for clothing and supply drinking water;
- see that employees, especially young people, are properly trained or under adequate supervision before using dangerous machines.