

The Florida Green

Spring 2011

Published four times a year:
On the 25th of January, April, July and October

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$20 for four issues. Contact the FGCSA office.

ADVERTISING: For rates and information, contact the FGCSA office at 800-732-6053

EDITORIAL: All inquiries should be directed to the editor, Joel Jackson, CGCS. Unsolicited manuscripts and photographs cannot be returned.

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ON THE COVER: Hole #1, St. Augustine Shores, St. Augustine, FL. Photo by Joel Jackson

FOREWORDS

Safety First

Spring is here. Temperatures are rising. Flowers and trees are blooming. Pollen is affecting our allergies, covering our cars and outdoor patio furniture. Poa annua is thriving. Mole crickets are tunneling. Goosegrass and crabgrass are preparing to make their debut. Fires are running rampant throughout the state. Increased water restrictions are being discussed. Yes, a typical Florida spring is upon us.

At the FGCSA Annual Reception held at Epcot, we said thanks to two longtime FGCSA contributors; Larry Kieffer, publication manager and Daniel Zelazek, the official photographer of *The Florida Green*. Both men contributed a great deal to our industry through their contributions to the FGCSA publications. We wish them good luck in the future.

A few messages ago, I wrote about some of the stupid – and I do mean, stupid – things I had done in the early days of my career that were unsafe practices. Our main priority is to maintain golf courses in the best possible condition our resources will allow. Along with this, keeping our employees safe should also be one of our main priorities.

We work in an environment where potential injury opportunities are abundant. Spinning reels, lifting bags and sod, slippery turf, poisonous snakes and plants, flying golf balls, falling trees. These are just some of the potential hazards.

Each operation should have a formal written safety plan that needs to be a focal point rather than a document to pull off the shelf whenever someone asks. Each operation should be conducting weekly safety meetings with their entire staff. At Walt Disney World Golf Course Maintenance, we have a plan that includes 62 topics.

We address a topic each Thursday at 11:00 am with the entire staff. Once we have gone through the entire list of topics, we start over. It is also our responsibility to make sure all safety procedures are being followed. We cannot just stand in front of our staffs in our weekly safety meeting, go over a subject and that's it.

When you see an employee not following the proper safety procedure,



*Gary Myers, CGCS
President*

address it immediately. Don't ignore it. Before any worker operates a piece of equipment or performs any task, they should be properly trained and that training documented. Make sure you have all of the necessary personal protective equipment (PPEs) required for your employees to perform their tasks. One could argue that eye protection is a requirement for every single task performed on a golf course. We require all of our employees to wear eye protection 100 percent of the time while working.

Mowers, tractors and utility vehicles come with seat belts now. We require all employees to wear their seat belts at all times. These are just two simple safety procedures that are easy to follow. None of us wants to see any of our workers hurt and none of us wants to be in a courtroom answering questions about our lack of a safety program if one of our workers is severely injured.

We also need to apply safety to ourselves and remember that we work outside exposed to the sun. Sun block and hats should be PPE for us as and our workers. Long-term sun exposure will likely cause skin damage at some point in our profession. We should be seeing our dermatologists every year for examinations. I see mine every six months and have something frozen or cut each visit. Melanoma is a serious and deadly cancer and we need to take our sun exposure very seriously.

Meanwhile, I hope everyone is enjoying the weather and has a terrific spring.