Crackdowns expected against underground tank law violators

By John G. Casanova, Ron Steg and GCN Staff

Federal and state agencies are beginning to talk tough as deadlines approach for installing leak detection devices on underground storage tanks come and go.

"If your tank leaks you're going to get caught," warned federal Environmental Protection Agency scientist Michael Kalinowski, whose agency can fine the owner of a non-conforming tank up to $10,000 per tank per day.

"At the point you have a leak, you're in real trouble. Leaks don't go away. They can take from one to five years to discover and cost millions of dollars to clean up. It's better to confront the issue now rather than pay for it later."

Confronting the issue involves several steps. Federal law required all USTs to be registered with the appropriate state environmental agency beginning in May 1988. Newly installed systems must be registered within 30 days.

Kalinowski estimated 90 to 95 percent of all tanks have been registered. Ignorance of the law is likely responsible for most of the non-registered tanks, although a small percentage are probably ignoring the law in the hopes they won't be caught, he acknowledged.

"We have fined tank owners in a couple of cases where (non-registered) tanks have leaked," Kalinowski said.

"At some point, ignorance of the law won't be a defense," added Chris Schult, public information officer with the Ohio State Fire Marshall's Office, which is responsible for enforcement.

CCA beats winter kill before it hits

By Frances G. Trimbble

The extensive winter kill suffered at Texas golf courses last year may have a positive effect on CCA activities.

One group of Southwestern superintendents intends to put the devastation in the past by taking a giant stride forward into the future.

Charles Fabian, regional superintendent for Club Corporation of America's 22 golf facilities in Texas and Oklahoma, calls CCA's recent decision to buy green covers at $700 apiece "a tough decision to make."

"Tough, because Fabian's region could just as easily not experience killer cold conditions this year. Or, the area — known for frigid weather — might have another damaging cold spell before April."

Lingerings memories of "the hassle of re-planting 142 putting greens" at a cost of $250,000 led Fabian and CCA to buy protective blankets for all 22 facilities.

He added, "The ones Quenton covered surviving, and the fact that they did led us to believe covers would be useful for all our greens under the right conditions."

Fabian cautioned that he doesn't feel anything absolutely guarantees against winter kill. "It can always get cold enough and stay cold long enough to kill Bermudagrass,"

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Environment dominated Faubel's presidency

By Peter Blais

Gerald Faubel hopes people will remember his term as president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America as a time when the entire golf industry focused on the importance of the environment.

"We've polled ourselves, we're truly concerned and we will act," said the outgoing GCSAA president. "You don't see many industries that do their own research, find fault and make changes without government forcing it.

Faubel said he has thoroughly enjoyed his year as president, which ends during this month's GCSAA Annual Conference and Show in Las Vegas.

"It's been a real pleasure to represent the organization dedicated to teaching its members relevant subjects. We've gotten tremendous cooperation from everyone in the industry, (PGA Tour Commissioner) Deane Beman has even recognized the importance of the golf course superintendent in getting the environmental matter taken care of."

Faubel has stressed the need for cooperation rather than confrontation between the golf industry and environmentalists. During the past year, EPA administrator Anne Leslie was named to the United States Golf Association Environment and Research Committee; GCSAA secretary/treasurer Bill Roberts testified before a U.S. Senate hearing on the environment; the USGA and the New York Audubon Society started a program that will make golf courses bird sanctuaries.

"(EPA Associate Administrator) Lewis Cron;amp;#039;ampton said at the Golf Summit how much he appreciated the GCSAA's effort to work with government agencies," Faubel said.

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Satellite turf campuses proposed

From staff reports

Southern Turf Nurseries President Dr. Tim Bowyer hopes to create satellite campuses internationally to train golf course superintendents and other turf managers.

"The structure for such education, as well as the information itself, has been well received and applied at Lake City (Fla.) Community College for years," he said.

"Basically, we plan to provide educational material in language comfortable to local authorities to reduce learning time. It has been our company experience that those executives with whom we are in contact with in Europe, Africa and Asia relate better to our message if given easy-to-understand information in a comfortable setting. They, in turn, pass along this newly acquired knowledge to company personnel."

Bowyer believes involvement of institutions such as Lake City Community College on an international level is almost essential to future turfgrass research.
Faubel signs off after exciting year as president

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"If we ever find something we're doing is hurting the environment, we'll stop those practices."
— Gerald Faubel

Manufacturers have answered the needs of superintendents, Faubel said, by developing equipment such as the rotary groomer that allows for a higher cut with no drop-off in putting conditions, and the water jet aerifier that permits aeration of rocky soils.

Faubel has been on the road 160 days in the past year. His travels have taken him to Canada for the annual golf tournament between the two countries' superintendent organizations, England to visit BIGGA headquarters and the Sports Turfgrass Research Institute; and Spain to help develop the Volderana Masters Scholarship for a Spanish student to study at a U.S. turf school.

"The GCSAA and our industry have really elevated the superintendent to a position of respect. Wherever I've been, I've always been treated with respect by people who want to know what is happening. The environmental issue has really brought the superintendent to prominence," Faubel said.

While no one can surpass superintendents in technical knowledge, they need improvement in managerial skills, Faubel said.

"Meeting the challenges of the coming decade while staying competitive is our greatest challenge. We will meet the environmental challenges. But we have to be good managers, especially on the business side," the outgoing president said.

Now that his term is done, Faubel is looking forward to spending more time watching over his home course, Saginaw (Mich.) Country Club. He is also starting a new business, a search firm matching courses with superintendents. His partners are former Michigan State University Turf Program Director Ken Payne and Robert Trent Jones Jr.

As for his successor, new GCSAA President Stephen Cedanelli, Faubel said: "He'll do a tremendous job. He has a great vision of where this organization should go. He comes from a teaching background and I think he's already had a big impact on our educational system. He'll be a tremendous benefit to the GCSAA."

Texas courses covered against threat

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no matter what you do to protect it. We feel this is insurance against the widespread, none-too-menacing type damage we suffered," he said.

Nevertheless, he said he has "very confidence the covers will work."

To make certain the covers do the job, Faubel called all CCA superintendents in the region together for a how-to-use, when-to-use session at Kingwood Country Club near Houston.

"Quenton Johnson put together a slide presentation that showed a crew performing each step of the deployment task. We also recommended a trial run on every green at every golf course, so that when the temperature was dropping and the wind was gusting to 30 miles per hour the guys wouldn't be out there trying to figure it out for the first time."

"There is a trick to deploying a 200-pound polyester cover so that the entire putting surface is protected and a minimum amount of the rectangular-shaped blanket is wasted. "How you lay the rolled cover down and which way you roll it out determines how precisely the green is covered," Faubel said.

Once the best way is ascertained, Faubel asked his colleagues to write instructions for deploying each blanket on the specific green for which it was designed.

Though there are several methods for anchoring the blankets, the CCA superintendents elevated the superintendent to a position of respect. "Twenty years ago, one-quarter inch was as low as greens were cut. Now we cut at one-eighth inch during some of the growing season. We are putting more stress on greens with lower cutting heights and more play," he said.

"With less play and higher mowing, we may have had less damage and no need for blankets at all. But this isn't 20 years ago and we don't have to just sit and hope for the best," the outgoing president said.

Francis Trimble is a freelance writer based in Houston, Texas.

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