Superintendents reshape state water restrictions

By ANDREW OVERBECK
HARRISBURG, Pa. — Following the drought of 1999 when sudden water restrictions forced golf courses in parts of Pennsylvania and New Jersey to cut irrigation use by as much as 90 percent, superintendents in both states teamed up with other green industry partners to retool drought emergency rules.

Working closely with each state’s department of environmental protection, the industry has achieved or is close to achieving new water restrictions that will not negatively impact golf courses. The three years of hard work is already paying off, as 26 counties in Pennsylvania and all of New Jersey have declared drought emergencies.

SUCCESS IN PENNSYLVANIA

According to superintendent Bill Wall at Dauphin Highlands Golf Club, the vague restrictions that the Pennsylvania DEP put forth in the summer of 1999 simply created confusion.

“The drought regulations opened the door to the people who were going to abuse them or ignore them altogether,” said Wall. “Some guys got screwed for cutting back because their courses went brown while others who ignored it had green turf.”

Spurred on by the late Dave Rafferty who was the superintendent at Chambersburg Country Club, Wall put together a group of superintendents from across the state and the DEP held meetings to discuss flaws in the regulations.

“They didn’t have any golf course experts,” Wall said. “This stuff is a different language to golf courses.”

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Moss hits Colorado hard, more research needed

By KEVIN ROSS, CGCS
DENVER — A recent symposium here brought superintendents from across Colorado together to discuss the sudden invasion of moss on greens. The problem is clearly widespread, as more than 140 superintendents attended the meeting to learn more about how to combat the rapidly spreading bryophyte.

There are still, however, more questions than answers.

The symposium featured Dr. Tony Koski from Colorado State University; Matt Nelson from the United States Golf Association’s Green Section; Matt Glese from Syngenta; and John Wyme from Bio-Safe Systems. Rusty Oetker from Soil Solutions also held a roundtable discussion.

The group presented information about the spread of moss, various research efforts, and possible control options.

According to Dr. Koski, controlling moss is difficult for three central reasons: “Moss is a very resilient and tough plant and we don’t really know that much about it because there has been little hardcore research done,” said Koski. “It is also very difficult to selectively eradicate.”

In Colorado, the moss plant on greens has been identified as Silvery Thread moss or B. argenteum.

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Flowtronex study quantifies water quality concerns

DALLAS — Pump station manufacturer Flowtronex recently conducted a survey of 603 randomly selected golf course superintendents to determine their attitudes toward and awareness of water quality issues and solutions. The study purposely targeted areas of the United States known for having high pH, carbonates and bicarbonates, excessive algae growth, etc.

The study was overseen by Flowtronex’s director of marketing Tom Levy.

The following results were collected:

• Overall, 63.3 percent of respondents said they had high pH, carbonates or bicarbonates.
• Eighty-eight percent of respondents stated they were concerned about water quality.
• Seventy-two percent use a lake or pond for irrigation water quality treatments. Other options listed included: aerator, filter, fertigation, ozone injection and biological treatments.
• One-quarter (26 percent) of superintendents do not test their water quality while another 47 percent test it less than once a month.
• Most (81.6 percent) use a lake or pond for irrigation water on their course and the average number of pump stations used by a facility is 2.2 (although the majority, 59 percent, have only one).
• Eighty-eight percent of superintendents use some level of familiarity with liquid fertilizers.
• Seventy-two percent use both liquid and granular fertilizers on their courses. Although most don’t feel strongly that either type is definitely better than the other, superintendents with an opinion prefer liquid fertilizers to granular (29.7 percent to 19.3 percent, respectively).

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Effective safety program begins with proper equipment

When it comes to meeting government mandated safety regulations for grounds workers, most superintendents know the basics. Many safety precautions are common sense — you need hearing protection when working around noisy equipment and you need safety goggles when working with mowing, weed-eating or chainsaw equipment.

However, it's important to periodically review your work environment to identify specific hazards that your employees are exposed to and make sure you have a good understanding of the minimum safety requirements mandated by law.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires employers to provide a workplace that is free from recognized health and safety hazards and to protect employees from those hazards when and where they occur. State laws vary and may be more stringent.

The Environmental Protection Agency's Federal Insecticide, Rodenticide and Fungicide Act relates to pesticide use and establishes the Worker Protection Standard (WPS) that applies to pesticide application activities such as mixing, loading, application and cleanup. It also applies to those working in or around treated areas and establishes restricted entry intervals for each pesticide and the minimum personal protective equipment (PPE) needed to handle and apply each product.

The following list provides safety equipment recommendations for activities around the golf course that warrant proper safety procedures.

- LOUD EQUIPMENT
  • Earplugs with a suitable decibel rating, reusable or disposable.
  • Corded or uncorded. A higher decibel rating (26dB - 31dB) covers all applications if using a variety of equipment.
  • Eye protection should include ANSI-approved, UV-filtering safety glasses with impact protection, preferably with peripheral side protection.
  • Teflon-coated chainsaw chaps will stop the blade on contact.

- STEEL-TOED SHOES
  • Proper maintenance procedures are required to present the golf course for play, but risk management and safety should be of equal importance.
  • Environmental concerns relate to pesticides, fertilizers, water quality and quantity and energy need to be addressed. Misuse or abuse of these materials can lead to serious damage and significant exposure to liability.
  • Golf course construction projects may be a source of accidents. Are open trenches properly marked? Is every care taken when digging around utilities? Are trenches protected against cave-ins? Is your golf course's equipment adequate for the task?

- SAFETY GOGGLES
  • Repetitive-motion problems are common in golf course maintenance operations. Precautions to avoid injury to employees who hold their wrists, arms or shoulders in odd positions or who frequently perform the same tasks continuously for long periods need to be in place.

- GLOVES
  • Steel-toed shoes are required to use during certain or all activities.
  • Gloves, gloves and coveralls are essential equipment when handling chemicals.

- SUNSCREEN
  • Drivers and passengers of utility vehicles and golf cars need to follow the same precautions as one would in their own motor vehicles.
  • The Occupational Safety and Health Administration policies could potentially result in hearing loss if not being imposed on employers who don't follow the requirements to provide workers with hard hats, goggles, fit-tested respirators and safety spray suits, and other protective gear needed for personal protection.

- RESPIRATORS
  • Repetitive-motion problems are common in golf course maintenance operations. Precautions to avoid injury to employees who hold their wrists, arms or shoulders in odd positions or who frequently perform the same tasks continuously for long periods need to be in place.

- DUST MASKS
  • Caution golfers about the presence of poisonous plants, snakes, alligators, fire ants, etc. Evidence of awareness will generally reduce liability awards should a suit result from injury from these hazards.

- DRIVERS AND PASSENGERS
  • Employee vehicles need to be in place.
  • A driving range accident waiting to happen.

- VEHICLES
  • Commitment to proper training and risk management programs are not developed overnight. But like it or not, golf course superintendents must consider the tasks of safety training and risk management as the highest priorities within their operations. Zero accidents should be the goal for the entire golf course staff.

- RISK MANAGEMENT
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- PREPAREDNESS
  • Preparing to manage unforeseen emergencies is the first and most important step to recovery, should a disaster strike.

- EMERGENCIES
  • Having written emergency response guidelines ensures that employees understand their duties and responsibilities and may significantly reduce liability in the event of a natural disaster.

- PASSIVE EQUIPMENT
  • Defibrillators belong on golf courses where cardiac arrests occur. It may soon be a greater liability risk for businesses that fail to purchase and use automated external defibrillators.

- EMERGENCY CONTACTS
  • Employees and guests should be adequately trained in fire safety and prevention programs.
  • Employees and golfers need to be educated about heat stroke, sunburn and the danger of skin cancer.

Ted Horton, CGCS is the head of Ted Horton Consulting in Canyon Lake, Calif.
Delaware achieves 100 percent Audubon participation

HOCKESSIN, Del. — The Delaware State Golf Association (DSGA) has become the first state to reach 100 percent participation in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) for golf courses. Through a venture spearheaded by its green section, the DSGA agreed to fund ACSP membership dues for all superintendents in Delaware. The group will fund membership each year to ensure statewide membership, while working with Audubon International to maximize participation in the program.

“We have been working on getting statewide participation for the last six months,” said Kevin Mayhew, superintendent at Newark Country Club. “All of the superintendents believed in the program and wanted to join, but saw the yearly dues as the hurdle.”

The DSGA decided to fund the effort because it recognizes the benefit that the ASCP provides its members.

“We saw this as a natural progression,” said J. Curtis Riley, the executive director of the DSGA. “There is no better way for the golfers of the state to keep the courses up with the latest programs to help protect and enhance the wildlife and...”

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