

PROTECTING YOUR CREW FROM PESTICIDIES

Pesticides are one of the worst health hazards involved in golf course maintenance. It is a superintendent's responsibility to make sure that the proper protective equipment is provided and worn by his crew. The following information is taken from G.C.S.A.A.'s "Pesticide Usage Reference Manual" available from Association headquarters in Lawrence, KA.

Many superintendents are alert to the dangers present when applying pest control chemicals but overlook these equally hazardous situations:

- 1) Handling of containers in moving from transport vehicle to storage area or in rearranging containers in the storage area
- 2) Measuring, loading or mixing operations
- 3) Disposal of empty containers
- 4) Cleaning of equipment after use
- 5) Laundering of contaminated clothing
- 6) Personal cleanliness

Cotton, leather or canvas gloves or boots will absorb large quantities of toxic materials and provide a constant exposure to the skin. If organophosphorus or carbamate insecticides are involved, wear natural rubber gloves unless the container label specifically states otherwise.

Rubberized boots are generally preferred for protection against chemicals because they wear well and can be cleaned with soap and water. Disposable plastic boots and gloves should not be used because they may not be strong enough to stand the rough conditions of continuous golf course usage.

Workers need additional protection when opening containers, mixing chemicals and filling application equipment because these operations involve direct skin or lung exposure to the chemicals. Therefore, goggles or face shields, head coverings and respirators should be worn. A rainsuit or coveralls can provide maximum protection, especially when very toxic chemicals are being handled. Headbands or goggles and face shields should be replaced periodically since they are absorbent and are in direct contact with the skin and hair.

Maximum protection is needed when chemicals are being applied, and the type of protection is dependent upon the types of chemicals being used. In spraying operations, operators are exposed to considerable hazard, because their clothing can become very wet. Waterproof rainsuits are recommended for the greatest degree of protection. If dusts or granular materials are being used, full-length coveralls are satisfactory. Both wet and dry applications need the use of respirators, gloves, boots and head and neck covering for maximum protection.

A moderately high risk factor is involved in the cleaning of equipment after use. Workers often are eager to shed protective clothing as soon as they return to the maintenance building, especially on hot days when most pesticides are applied. Every effort must be made to prevent this since the normal splashing and spilling of contaminated water onto bare skin or clothing can lead to serious consequences.

Protective clothing suggested during clean-up includes: rubberized boots, rubber gloves, goggles or face shield, and waterproof suit or large rubberized apron. All clothing should be thoroughly washed with soap and water after each usage. This includes gloves, boots, coveralls, waterproof suits, etc. The final safeguard is that of personal cleanliness—each person who has handled toxic chemicals must be instructed to wash or shower thoroughly as soon as possible after finishing his work. Failure to do so can produce tragic results, especially if the worker is unduly sensitive to a given chemical.

If all this seems unreasonable, bear in mind that you, as a golf course superintendent, are completely responsible for the health and safety of your crew.

Reprint FORE FRONT G.C.S.A.A.