



## January Thaw

By Bob Vavrek, regional director, Central Region

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The current thaw affecting areas in the Central Region provides a unique opportunity to make a mid-winter assessment of turf conditions. For example, a walk through the course can reveal any disease activity breaking through the barrier of snow mold fungicides that were applied last fall or areas where spray coverage was less than ideal. Disease-affected sites can be mapped and targeted for cultural and chemical treatments during early spring, just as soon as the turf becomes firm enough to accommodate maintenance traffic.

A walk through also allows turf managers to document shade problems that affect turf quality on greens and tees. Evergreen trees are especially problematic because they shade turf all year. Shade can be particularly troublesome during the winter months when the sun angle is low and day length is short.



*Ice and snow accumulations are greater and linger longer during a thaw across areas of a putting green that are shaded by evergreen trees.*

The greatest accumulations of ice and snow typically are found across the most heavily shaded areas of putting greens. To make matters worse, greens affected by dense shade are the last to thaw as temperatures moderate during spring. More often than not, these sites already are compromised going into the winter due to a lack of turf density, shallow rooting and a high percentage of *Poa annua*.

It should come as no surprise that dense shade on greens and winterkill go hand in hand.

Comparing a picture of winter shade patterns and heavy ice accumulation to a similar pattern of severe winterkill observed during spring will definitely make a convincing argument for aggressive chainsaw action. As mentioned above, evergreens impact turf quality 365 days a year and common sense dictates that their removal will provide four full seasons of benefit. Then again, you really shouldn't have to wait until grass dies to decide the relative importance of a pine tree versus a putting green. Furthermore, there is plenty of research to support the simple fact that when you want sustainable, high-quality turf on a playing surface...you will never have it made in the shade.

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