



April Showers

By Bob Vavrek, regional director, Central Region

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Intense rainfall usually chases the maintenance staff back to the turf care facility because waterlogged soils are highly susceptible to compaction and rutting.

Duties shift from mowing to employee training or cleaning the shop. However, heavy rain that is not accompanied by lightning provides a unique opportunity to identify and document drainage problems throughout the course if you are willing to brave the elements.



A short period of intense rainfall provides an ideal opportunity to document the exact location of drainage issues.

During a deluge you can observe drainage patterns in real time. Does surface water flow directly into a bunker? This could be the cause of washouts and sand contamination. Is surface drainage impeded by an elevated collar caused by the slow, but steady, accumulation of sand topdressing over the years? This could make areas of the putting surface susceptible to ice suffocation during the winter and wet wilt during the summer. These, and other potential problems associated with improper surface drainage, can easily be documented with photographs or videos taken during heavy rain events. Wait until the rain subsides and you will miss the show.

When documenting surface drainage issues, it helps to include some reference points – e.g., a sprinkler head or quick coupler – in the image to understand the scope of the work required to fix the problem. A transit level can help pinpoint low spots once the general area is identified, but there is nothing like actually

seeing and marking where water flows to determine where modifications to the grade are necessary. Mark problem spots with an irrigation flag and triangulate that location from two nearby sprinklers to relocate the area when puddles disappear. Another marking option is to insert a small, bristle-type ground marker into problem areas at a depth that won't interfere with play or mowers. Use a marking color that can be seen without being too distracting.

Never underestimate the importance of adequate surface drainage. A walk in the rain could be an eye-opening experience that begins to explain why some areas of turf fail to meet expectations later in the season. Keep in mind that April showers can do more for a golf course than simply bringing May flowers

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