

**Jon Allbutt examines the management of health & safety at work**

This is the first of three articles that concentrates on specific areas of risk assessment that directly affects the management of golf courses. This month I will deal with the all important Management Regulations, but first what do we mean by the term risk assessment?

It is a pity that all the hype about the "New Six Pack" of regulations overlooked an important fact, and that is, there is nothing new about risk assessments at all. The decisions we make in our day to day management and also when planning future projects has always involved an element of risk assessment. Discussions like "It might be better (safer) not to use the Allen on the green surrounds to-day, I had a look this morning on the way in and they are a bit soft"; "Can you hand mow the tees to-day, the approach is very wet and I don't think you will get on, and off, (safely) without making a mess".

Greenkeepers are of course a brave lot and we do find situations where, instinctively, you knew it might be 'pushing it a bit' to take a machine on a slope in poor ground conditions, but you try anyway; greenkeepers meet-

# Getting to grips with **RISK ASSESSMENT**

ings are full of stories about the consequences!

At one of the Management Courses at Aldwark Manor I asked for a show of hands from delegates who had gone on to a

green in the wrong gear, set down the cutters, forgot about the wrong gear, finished the job, raised the cutters and shot off the green at high speed! The show of hands was in the majority!

So risk assessment is nothing new, it is the procedure of carrying out a formal inspection of the site, identifying any hazards (a situation that has the potential to cause harm or injury) and assess-

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# RISK ASSESSMENT

ing the risk (the likelihood that injury will occur).

The important difference between the traditional approach and now is that we have to be formal about it and record the "significant findings" of the assessment, and then make sure that all involved are informed, and trained so that the risk is reduced, or eliminated by design.

An important part of the process is avoiding the problem by removing the hazard, or making sure that equipment is "fit for the purpose", that is the job it is going to do is considered carefully before purchase. Ideally have the equipment for a demonstration to see if it can do the job.

These principles apply to any risk assessment situation, so what is different about the Management Regulations?

Regulation 3 states:

"(1) Every employer shall make a



**A busy course always provides the risk of being hit by a ball**

*suitable and sufficient assessment of—*

*(a) the risks to the health and safety of his employees to which are exposed whilst they are at work; and*

*(b) the risks to the health and safety of persons not in his employment arising out of or in connec-*

*tion with the conduct by him undertaking, for the purpose of identifying the measures he needs to take to comply with the requirements and prohibitions imposed upon him by or under the relevant statutory provisions".* Quite a mouthful, what does it mean?

The employer must undertake a broad look at the workplace and identify hazards to his employees, or any other persons (golfers or the public) who might be affected by the business. There is no need to repeat any other work already carried out, for example, the risk assessment will identify hazardous chemicals, but these should have already been risk assessed under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH), so no action is necessary if these regulations have adequately reduced the risks.

On a golf course there are no 'Being Hit by Golf Balls Regulations', so under the Management Regulations you identify any areas of the golf course where staff are having problems with being hit by golf balls. Check that the Club has a policy on priority, and that staff and players are adhering to it. This could involve not opening for play until, say, eight o'clock; or on a Pay and Play, Municipal or other course where there is no control over start times it may be necessary to issue guidance to ensure all on the course understand the Club policy. For example the scorecard might have the following note:

"Greenstaff have priority on the course, they will give way whenever practicable. The ball will not be played where greenstaff are within range; please wait until

the way is clear or you are called through".

Such a clear statement makes it quite clear to both parties the Club Policy and serves as a guide to everybody involved. In the event of an accident it will greatly assist the Inspector to decide who was at fault (if anyone). Where 'hot spots' on the course are identified it may be necessary to place notices on tees, provide towers or some other way to ensure players and staff are not at risk.

There are no 'Take Care on Steep Slopes Regulations', so it is necessary to identify slopes, measure the angle, and decide if they are safe all the time, or just when very wet, or very dry. When designing new features on the course make sure you have thoroughly considered how they are to be maintained before construction.

I looked recently at a new tee (designed by the Captain!) on an established course and asked what special type of machine was to be used to cling to its precipitous slopes, the Course Manager answered with a sigh 'we don't know, probably have to use a flymo or strimmer'. Now here is an important point, most risk assessments result in an increase in operational efficiency. Compare the cost of hand mowing, strimming with using modern ride on mowers.

If you take this argument to its extreme we could end up with some very bland, boring golf courses!. So be sensible and make sure you keep in mind that the object of the exercise is to create a safer working environment within the limits of the site, and the needs of the game.



**There are no 'Take Care on Steep Slope' regulations**