

# The



Ever increasing standards are being set for the dress of greens staff as more clubs realise that presentation is all important. However, while smart pullovers with the club crest look neat they cannot be called protective clothing nor are they ideal for working outside. In contrast, polycotton boilersuits or jacket and trousers probably do meet this criteria and are easy to launder, furthermore, they are readily available in many colours and designs. However, protective clothing can, and should, be construed more widely than this and considered as a head to toe concept.

Precisely what protection is necessary depends largely upon the particular job and the circumstances. The most basic protection is against the dirt and grass of day to day working, but perhaps most greenkeepers will think more readily of wet weather gear. Chemical protection is another dimension, and specialist wear, but one which probably brings up images of hot clammy suits (it needn't), while anyone employed with a chain saw will need a different form of protection. Strimming, hedgetrimming and brushcutting are other tasks which require the operator to wear specialised gear, while workshop work should require protective footwear at least.

Nor can dust masks and respirators be forgotten as there are many times when they should be employed, just think of strimming edges when the weather is very dry, or perhaps filling a sprayer, both tasks which will need a specific type of protection.



# protection racket

Hugh Tilley examines the world of protective clothing for the golf course

Those who suffer from chapped hands or dermatitis from handling chemicals, including fertiliser, should consider gloves, or perhaps if working with machinery, mitts.

These instances highlight the requirements for protective clothing which is suited to the task. In the past scant regard has been placed on protective clothing, however, changed perceptions as well as the advent of health and safety legislation means that it must now be regarded seriously. But there is more to protective clothing than safety, modern protective clothing adds a look of professionalism, and by keeping the wearer comfortable should add to productivity.

Protective clothing is available from a wide variety of outlets, but generally those closely associated with specific activities, ie suppliers of chemicals and fertilisers to golf clubs usually have chemical and weather protective suits, while the best place to locate protective clothing for chain saws and brushcutters will be at a dealer specialising in such machinery. Furthermore the supplier, should be the best person to advise on the most suitable form of protection. Wearing inappropriate protection is as foolhardy, dangerous and even as illegal as wearing nothing at all. However, there are specialist suppliers who may also offer a mail order facility - and these should also be available to advice with authority.

Normal everyday protective clothing such as boilersuits and work boots are also available from country stores. Head gear has not in the past received much attention, however, the last year has

seen protective hats specifically designed to protect against flying golf balls. In the past one of the problems with headgear has been "image" - macho man's image. Builders' or jockeys' hard hats have not seemed appropriate course wear, and woolly bobble or soft baseball hats don't do much for a club's image - nor do they offer any protection against ball strike. For tasks such as chainsawing, brushcutting and strimming a hard hat which combines visor and ear defenders is likely to be ideal, although both ear and eye protection can be provided by separate units, and this may be a more flexible approach and allow goggles or visor and ear defenders to be used for other tasks.

There is much to be said for protective items such as masks, goggles, ear defenders and even hats to be considered as "personal property" and specific to an individual. That way the wearer can be made responsible for them - for their being available, worn and in good condition - and it prevents excuses such as condition or loss being used for not wearing them. In addition with many of these items there are often strong personal preferences, for instance one greenkeeper may prefer a polycarbonate and/or acetate visor for strimming while another may prefer a mesh one or even goggles. Goggles tend to steam up, although this is easy to remedy by cleaning them thoroughly. Both these and plastic visors are made of relatively soft material so are easily scratched.

Boots must be considered as personal wear, this is seldom a problem, particularly as expensive

chainsaw boots are only likely to be needed by one or two people in the team - those who have received training on the use of the saw. Normal protective footwear is not expensive - and it is VAT zero rated. Gum boots may be ideal for keeping the wet out, but they also keep it in, and promote hot sweaty feet. Nor will these rubber boots provide a high level of protection against other hazards - like dropping a drawbar on your foot - or putting a fork into it - unless they are a special protective model. Clubs which make an allowance for protective clothing may find it pays to provide the occasional tin of waterproofing wax or oil for wax jackets and boots.

Greenkeepers who pay for their own protective clothing should be able to claim a tax allowance for this. Most protective clothing is also zero rated for VAT, and both of these financial incentives should promote higher levels of wear.

The most frequently considered protective wear are waterproofs. Again there are many personal preferences, from all-in-one's to jacket and leggings, not forgetting long coats. Cost is as variable as the style. Experience suggests that some are much better value for money than others. The more obvious factors are length of life and initial cost, however, this is far from the whole story, and perhaps more important is comfort and wearability. Most people will know all about the need for the garment to "breathe" - to allow perspiration out while not letting rain in. Hood or hat again may be down to personal preference, for myself I prefer a sou'wester to a builtin hood - and a towel round the neck of the jack-

et if it is really inclement. And again my own preference is for button round leggings, but these don't give protection to your bottom. Some jackets are designed to fit over the back of a seat which keeps it dry - while you are on it. Riding style coats are also designed for this - however long coats are not really suitable for wearing on machinery. If it is raining hard and you have to dismount regularly the seat will get wet anyway - so it is easier to pin a weighted plastic bag over the seat and lift it aside when you mount, or some people may prefer an all-in-one waterproof boiler suit - then you can ignore the puddle on the seat.

Other areas in which not all weatherproof suits are equal are in the cuffs - storm cuffs with press stud or Velcro are the norm and allow the cuff to be loose or tight according to the weather and job, but bottoms of trousers may or may not be wide enough to pull over boots - and seal there - drain pipes are designed to channel water. Nor can all suits be donned or doffed without taking the boots off. This can be most annoying, which is why so many greenkeepers keep them on during their lunch break - not conducive to a relaxing break and it steams up the mess room. The usual colour for weather proof gear is green, olive or khaki, but there may be an argument in favour of brighter colours so that the greenkeeper is more conspicuous. Another problem area with some waterproofs is that while they normally come in a range of sizes this normally relates to girth, and while high street outfitters have realised that humans vary in height and girth many pro-



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protective wear suppliers have not. So if your proportions do not match the supplier's "norm" you may have a problem - usually with cuffs covering your hands or up at your elbows. If you have this problem it may be worth trying a yacht chandler - you'll probably get a bright yellow suit but you will keep dry.

Water and chemical proof suits are mandatory for handling chemicals and come in various styles, many are disposable - ideal, except that they are probably more easily torn, which defeats their whole purpose. The commonest complaint is that they are hot and clammy - but if the spraying vehicle has a closed cab with air filtration there is no need to wear them inside it in fact they should not be worn inside because you then bring in any contamination - to a closed compartment. Sprayers should have a locker specifically for contaminated clothing.

Chemical handling will require waterproof gloves, and these need

to be long enough to cover the wrist and seal with the jacket cuff.

If your chemical supplier does not have gloves which are large, comfortable or strong enough, try an agricultural dealer specialising in dairy supply. Grip can be a problem with rubber gloves, but most designs have special grip areas moulded in. Turning the gloves inside out may be possible and this will allow left and right handed gloves to be interchanged - and it may save having to throw away one good glove.

Mitts - particularly woollen ones, are also likely to be reversible. These won't do for chemical work, but are ideal for machine operation where thumb and forefinger are needed to work throttle or screw adjustments. Forestry mitts have the forefinger separate as well as the thumb. A whole range of working gloves are available to suit all types of task, nor are these expensive - especially when viewed against the misery caused by chapped and raw hands. The

greatest problem is that inexpensive gloves seldom fit very well, few match your actual hand width and finger length which is likely to reduce their life considerably. If

you need substantial leather gloves for hedge work, etc., and cannot find what you need locally try a supplier of welding goods - they usually have a great range of substantial gloves. If grip is necessary - for instance when raking, consider a knitted pvc coated or kevlar design similar to those used by yachtsmen. Lightweight latex gloves can often be worn inside a more substantial leather or leather/canvas glove to give weatherproofing with resilience to damage.

Dust masks and respirators, while both coming under the banner of breathing protection, are totally different in

concept, thus it is vital to recognise what you are trying to be protected against.

There should be very few instances when a full respirator to protect against noxious fumes is needed on a golf course. If such gases are present then specialist advice should be taken. For normal chemicals the greatest risk is of splashes and spray mist and this should not need a full respirator - read the label on the can. However, there are plenty of occasions on the golf course when a dust mask is indicated. For most situations an inexpensive disposable mask will be adequate, the dust is the nuisance and not normally toxic. Every greenkeepers shed should have a supply of these masks, few actually have. Some people will find more expensive face masks more comfortable to use. Particularly comfortable

may be one of the powered respirators, but these are expensive. They use a small fan powered by a battery pack which pumps air through a filter to the face. The slight pressure induced around the face keeps dust out.

Comfort in use is one of the most important criteria in selecting any protective wear, on the basis that if it is not comfortable it won't be used. Another important point to consider, particularly with clothing that is used around machinery is that it should be close fitting and not have flaps, pockets or belts which can get caught. Pockets which catch on levers or door handles are dangerous. Velcro is a wonderful invention to keep pocket flaps shut - and it works well on cuffs.

For the wearer there may be other reasons to prefer protective clothing, for instance it is likely to be neater and easier to launder or clean. It may also avoid a need to have to think of what to wear to work. There are a whole host of standards relating to protective clothing. Protective clothing is seldom expensive but this is no reason not to look after it. Special lockers to hold it are a worthwhile investment, and a good maxim is that if you look after your protective clothing, it will look after you.

