

Joe Paulin gives some helpful advice that might just see you through the trauma of course vandalism

Criminal

I was recently called in to do some consulting work at The London Golf Club where, you may have read in the papers, nearly half of their 36 USGA greens have been criminally damaged not once but twice! The management and greenstaff have dealt with these blows in a very professional and efficient manner and are to be commended as well as commiserated with. This is every club's worst nightmare, but how many clubs are prepared for the worst?

Vandalism is too soft a word in most cases - it is a criminal act that should be treated and prepared for as such. Criminal damage can occur in many forms from graffiti on buildings, tee marker, ball washer, flag and flagpole damage or theft to the physical and or chemical damage to the turf. Criminal damage often takes place in the commission of a burglary as well.

Most clubs have security of some description. The clubhouse will certainly be alarmed along with the pro shop if it is in a separate building. These areas are probably fairly well lit and often will be protected by security cameras. But what about the maintenance buildings, pump house and other out-buildings? What about the biggest asset in the Club - Your turf?

You and the rest of the club's management need to ask yourself questions such as:

What does our insurance actually cover?

Are you covered for criminal damage to the greens and other fine turf areas?

Is the club covered for loss of earnings as a result of criminal damage?

Has the club's insurers given the club advice on security measures that will help prevent an incident from happening and reduce premiums? Such as:

- Check that all buildings are well lit
- Check that all possible access points are secure especially skylights
- Make sure all stock and machinery is properly inventoried (photographic records)
- Insure that all vehicle keys are kept secure
- Insure that petrol tank caps are locked
- Check that any and all security fencing is well maintained and checked regularly
- Introduce security cameras or additional security cameras and/or motion sensors
- Use vehicle immobilisers
- Use in-house security guards or a security company
- Know who has keys to what
- Change locks if keys cannot be accounted for
- Ensure that padlocks are high quality and difficult to get at with bolt cutters or hack saws.

Is our water supply as secure as possible from intentional contamination?

Do we have an emergency plan to deal with possible chemical and/or physical damage to greens and/or tees? Consider items such as:

- Call the police and the insurance company
- Notify club management and club officers
- Document any and all damage with photographs
- Inform the members as to what has happened and what actions are being taken

Dealing with the actual damage itself -

- If you don't have your own source of turf to repair the

damage, have a turf grower who can supply you at short notice.

- Have the name and address of a reputable laboratory in case of the need to identify chemicals or substances used
- Take samples of soil that may have been contaminated and try to germinate seed in them to try and determine if the substance has a residual effect
- If you have trouble identifying the substance used
- Have a supply of activated charcoal available which may help to nullify the effects of contamination
- Consider flooding the affected area (a wetting agent will usually aid in this operation) in order to wash off and/or dilute the substance used bearing in mind that the run-off could cause damage to other areas
- Be prepared to core, verticut, overseed (always have a supply of seed in stock) and topdress in order to repair any damage in conjunction with any turfing requirements as the circumstances dictate
- Be prepared to fence or rope off the damaged areas
- Along with the photographic evidence, you should accurately map any damaged areas for your historical records.

Can we use this negative incident in a positive way? Such as:

- If the green or tee is severely damaged, it gives you the opportunity to rebuild, turf or renovate an area that required improving anyway
- If a green is out of play for a period of time, it is an opportunity to carry out needed work in surrounding areas

damage

such as bunker renovations

- Every experience should be used as a learning experience and to see if any lessons can be learned for the future

What is our relationship with the local community and how can we improve our image?

- Involve the local schools in any environmental projects you may have
- Speak to local schools about greenkeeping as a career
- Write articles for the local paper or get on local radio to talk about the positive effects golf courses have on the environment avoiding controversial issues such as rabbit and squirrel control
- Use organisations such as the Guides and Scouts to carry out tasks around the course as a way for them to raise funds

Do we have replacement tee markers, flags, flag-poles and spare ball washers and benches?

- Show the perpetrator that you are prepared for as they will often become bored fighting a losing battle
- Show your members that you are prepared as well
- Consider bringing in these items each night if it is a persistent problem

Do we have a supply of graffiti remover?

The above ideas I hope will provide food for thought. No two clubs have the same problems or requirements, but the basics of being prepared should apply to all clubs. Golf courses are always going to be vulnerable to attack due to their sheer size and

general ease of access, but that doesn't mean that you can't be proactive in preparing and planning for the worst. Many times, those that are most prepared are those that are least affected

