

Health & Safety Legislation - Friend or Foe

Having worked as a greenkeeper, Course Manager and latterly assisted in the overall management of a golf club, whenever the words 'Health & Safety' came up they brought a mix of fear, dread, and loathing.

Fear because I could not understand much of what was being said or written. Dread because if I could not understand what was required what chance did I have to ensure the safety of the environment in which we worked and, more importantly, managed? Loathing because I had enough work to do without anything extra.

The purpose of this article is to convince those who may still have any, or all, of the above negative viewpoints that there is no need to fear, dread or loathe this area of management and just accept that it is part of the job we do.

• FEAR & DREAD - THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR OR DREAD

The Health and Safety Executive want everyone to understand what is involved and have made great strides in simplifying legislation to that end. In modern speak their aim is to make it all more 'user friendly'.

If you know you have a problem pick up the phone and ask for help - their attitude would be entirely different to you at that stage than if they were forced to call because of an unfortunate incident - it's too late then, the damage has been done.

• LOATHING - DON'T LOATHE IT, WELCOME IT

Any perceived extra work is soon incorporated into the daily work routine. In the same way that we incorporate the assessment of staff in NVQ training we do the same thing for Health & Safety.

To be honest I thought I would have to sit down for hours every day and fill in paperwork but in reality that could not be further from the truth - as long as you have a simple Health & Safety system in place.

The system is managed in three simple categories or steps.

• COMPLIANCE CHECK

Audit all you have in place and match it to current UK and EU Health & Safety legislation - this will tell you exactly where you are.

• FILLING THE GAPS

The compliance check will highlight what you do not have - you will find that you have a lot in place already thanks to advisors in our Industry/Profession in the past explaining the need to observe a safe working environment - in a lot of instances you will find what you have already just needs updating.

• MONITORING/MANAGING/MAINTAINING

If any new legislation comes into force, e.g. the recent Disability Discrimination Act, or you make any changes following a risk assessment in any area, e.g. changing the design of a golf hole, you must have a simple system in place that will alert you to update as necessary.

An annual audit - a sort of mini compliance check - will ensure you continue to comply with all relevant legislation.

IN SUMMARY

As soon as you decide to take the first step - the compliance check - the Health & Safety Executive will be happy because you are demonstrating that you recognise the need to set a system in place to ensure you manage a safe working environment.

You will find all relevant information you need through the Internet, HSE, GTC, BIGGA, etc or if all else fails give us a call and we will our best to help.

Tip of the Month

Geoff Coggan MG

Vice President of Golf Course Operations - Jan Stephenson Inc



EXPANDING UNDERSTANDING

All too often we as Superintendents, greenkeepers become immersed in our own little world. The golf course becomes 'ours' and anyone that cannot see our point of view or does not immediately gives us the resources we want becomes an adversary. This may sound a little far fetched but if you look closely at your operation you may find more truth to the statement than you first realised.

My tip is to try to become involved in the course operation as a whole. Develop a better understanding of the problems that other department heads face. If you receive financial statements don't just look at yours and disregard the rest, ask questions, try to understand how their budgets work.

How many members do you have? How many rounds of golf are you doing? How can you help make the club more successful, after all you do want that extra person on the crew or that new piece of equipment right!

Approach the powers that be and express your desire to be involved more, if possible try to spend some time with other department heads in their arena so that you get a feel for what they go through. You will probably find the golf pro to be more of an ally than you thought.

Who knows, you may take the reins at your club someday.

Do you have a tip that has helped you in your day-to-day work on the golf course? If so, why not share it with other greenkeepers. Please send any tips you feel would benefit your fellow readers to us either by post at BIGGA HOUSE or by email to gareth@bigga.co.uk.