



## HEALTH & SAFETY GUIDANCE

*In this article David Golding, GTC's Education Director, explains why the GTC invested in reviewing the Health & Safety Guidance booklet and how you can access the revised information*

### **I don't know of many people in life who at some time or another have made a negative comment about Health & Safety legislation!**

We have all had a spit at the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) at some time or another however, a short time ago I visited its Headquarters and enjoyed the experience!

Yes, the staff are friendly, real people who are regularly at the brunt of media jibes or blames for much of the disruption in the country.

Whether it's the wrong types of leaves on the train tracks or school closures due to snow and children have dared to start a slide on the ice, it seems it is always blamed on the HSE.

Well I have to say I came out of the meeting with a fresh approach and certainly a better understanding of the role of the HSE.

We all know that whether it is in the above examples, Network Rail or the school, somebody somewhere has made a decision based on safety grounds or more likely the fear of litigation.

So let us have a look at our "own house" the golf course. So many H&S issues to consider from greenkeepers maintenance facilities to the safe use of machinery, to dangerous holes to course closures, the list is endless.

What the GTC did in 1993 was to raise the awareness of H&S on the golf course by producing a booklet specific for our sector in association with HSE staff.

It quickly became a best seller and certainly helped employers, employees and local authority environmental officers understand the key areas within golf course maintenance and management, however, in hindsight there was still plenty of work to be done by the employers and the employees at every golf club to put in place good working practices including developing a Health & Safety Policy.

I remember Jon Allbutt, the GTC's H&S advisor stating several years after we had produced the guidance booklet that when asking for a show of hands at EGU seminars the majority of delegates had all bought, or at least seen, a copy of the guidance but to date had not put in place their own systems and policy. He said that many employers had welcomed the booklet but saw it as a lifebelt that if hung up on the wall then that ensures everything is in place should an accident occur!

Well despite that observation many golf clubs now have an up to date H&S Policy in place and thankfully we (sports turf) do not figure highly on the radar of the enforcement officers within local authorities.

We do receive reports on purges occasionally in an area but due to the

very low numbers of reported accidents and incidents other industries seem to attract more attention.

I do not want to portray an "everything in the garden is rosy" picture! Many near misses go unreported and only serious accidents receive immediate attention and there have been a few prosecutions. The GTC wants to assist the employers and employees it represents by way of giving everybody the correct information and guidance to ensure a safe working environment and a safe golf course for golfers to enjoy.

The revised Guidance notes have been developed by the GTC H&S advisors and they have the HSE's endorsement.

The HSE, while encouraging industries to develop their own guidance notes, go to great lengths to emphasise that they are developed by industry, for industry.

With these guidance notes, the GTC hopes that there is far more assistance to readers through links and information to allow them to minimise risks for staff, golfers and the public.

The guidance notes are available on-line through the GTC website and when viewed alongside the BIGGA/GCMA Safety Management System (available through their respective websites) we sincerely hope we are again giving golf club employers and greenkeepers the tools to use appropriately at their golf club.

Let us keep working together to improve greenkeepers workplace welfare and also ensure employers meet their legislative responsibilities.

H&S does not need to be an unnecessary evil, accidents will happen but let's hope we in golf can continue to act in a responsible manner.

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David Golding may be contacted on Email: [david@the-gtc.co.uk](mailto:david@the-gtc.co.uk) or Tel: 01347 838640

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