



On the Soapbox

A new vehicle for people within the industry to express their viewpoint

Pity the poor Safety Advisor as he lives for the day when he visits a golf club client to find that the club Owners/Directors have actually read his last report, listened to the recommendations of the management team, taken some form of action, and then communicated their proposals for action all the way down the chain of command! Here follows a few grumbles from your dedicated safety advisor!

There is no doubt that there are clear trends in the way golf clubs fail to deal with what are in most cases very straightforward issues that are not going to cost a lot of money; Why is this? Health and Safety Inspectors could not make it more clear to employers that they are looking for evidence that the business is doing its reasonable best to develop and improve, in an ongoing way, a safety management system that is relevant to their level of business activity and the hazards that have been identified by their managers.

A fundamental problem is that I am still finding confusion among the Committee/Directors of some members clubs about exactly who is the employer. This leads to some strange signatures on the Statement of Safety Policy; there is no way round this little problem - this all important document is to be signed by a representative of the employer. So, to help these poor folk to decide I recommend that they ask themselves a simple series of questions.

Who is responsible for forming the policies of the club and setting the direction for its future development? Irrespective of titles, who sits at the 'top of the shop'? Well sir, it is you, and your colleagues, who are the employer.

Effective communication is a key element in ensuring that all employees know what is going on and this process starts at the top. The employer has a duty to inform his employees of those important decisions that will have an effect on the way they carry out their duties and about any changes to policies, procedures, not to mention physical changes to the site. This important aspect of the management of a business is much neglected and yet it is 'good to talk'.

A good test for us weary advisors is to ask about our last report. The story of the journey of a report is sometimes bizarre! Having paid a fee for the report it is sometimes lost 'in the system' with puzzled frowns on faces as Chairman of Green etc try and remember

where it went. "Let's see now, the report was sent in May so perhaps it is in the June/July minutes? No there doesn't seem to be a record of it being considered by any Committee or the Board!" "But it contained a summary of the key recommendations for action on page 4?" Ah yes, well perhaps you could summarise them again in this report?"

But let us not be too critical of the Owners/Directors of the club, what about the staff? Let us look at the worrying increase in accidents involving the use of work equipment on slopes; not just large ride-on machines but the issue of using hand held rotary mowers on slopes using ropes that have firmly tied off the 'dead man' handle! In one month alone I had three enquires from exasperated Health and Safety Inspectors asking for my opinion.

not understand? Do you really think that your reason 'Oh, but I am on and off the machine constantly' really stands up? So Head Greenkeepers/Course Managers how about setting an example and enforcing a safety rule?

Finally, a word about the golfer. What exactly is wrong with sleeper steps that have been in use on golf courses long before I started my greenkeeping career in 1962?

How come we are getting an increasing number of complaints and some claims for accidents where careless golfers are stumbling on these perfectly adequate features of a golf course? Soft spikes wear down at least twice as fast as proper spikes and they need to be changed perhaps several times a year! You will also find that if you actually look where you are going you might not fall down so often!

Trials and Tribulations of a Safety Advisor

Apparently one Course Manager was firmly of the view that it is 'custom and practice' among greenkeepers and should be allowed to continue. This despite a prosecution pending against one golf club following an accident with loss of toes, yes the wrong footwear was being worn as well!

I have a few questions for you all who are allowing this daft and dangerous practice - 'Are you mad?' Have you not heard of the principles of risk assessment, that you should actively seek alternatives that would reduce the risk without significantly interfering with the efficiency of the job? Do you have the evidence that you have looked at the problem and can find no alternative way of doing the job? Think hard before you allow this practice to continue as it will be you, yes you, who will be asked to explain why the operator was allowed to interfere with the safety controls.

While on the subject of safety and work equipment, let me explain something that you appear not to appreciate. Seat belts are fitted to ride on work equipment where Roll Over Protection Systems (ROPS) are in use and they will be worn in the circumstances identified in the risk assessment where a roll over accident is likely. That means the operator will get on the machine and BELT UP! So what bit of BELT UP do you



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The views expressed within On The Soapbox are not necessarily those of Greenkeeper International