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Lone working controlling the risk

Recent events have highlighted the dangers of lone working in greenkeeping – and the turf management industry as a whole. What lessons can we learn? What can be done to reduce lone working risk? What does the law require and what simple, practical controls can be introduced? Tom Searle from Britrisk Safety shared his views with GI

Firstly let's be clear about a few key facts - lone workers are those who work alone without close or direct supervision, even though others may be present in the area.

There can be little doubt that whatever risks are present by virtue of the actual task being undertaken, they automatically become far more acute due to the simple fact that the person concerned is alone or isolated, so this is not an issue that should be seen as trivial in any sense.

Whilst it is not illegal to work alone, the law does require employers to carry out a risk assessment and take steps to avoid or control the risks where necessary. The assessment must involve instruction, training and supervision. There is also a requirement to consult workers when considering potential risks and measures to control them.

The assessment may include:

- An awareness that some tasks may be too hazardous to be carried out by an unaccompanied worker and that as a consequence at least two people must be present at all times.

- If this is not practicable, that task is deferred until more staff are present e.g. when on weekend duty, avoiding using machinery for potentially dangerous complex tasks (such as mowing steep banks).

- How the task and lone worker will be supervised.

- The means by which assistance and support is summoned should the need arise.

- The arrangements for emergency response and how this will be delivered.

- Whether the worker concerned has any personal health risk factors such as a heart condition or asthma that may inherently raise their personal risk level.

- Whether there is any reason to think that there may be a raised risk of attack or assault – such as cash carrying, or being called out at night to investigate a premises alarm.

- Reference to monitoring arrangements as specified below.

Monitoring arrangements are a critical aspect of supervision. This may include:

- Supervisors periodically visiting and observing the place of work

and ensuring that the task in hand is being carried out safely and in accordance with instructions.

- A 'Buddy' system involving regular contact between worker and supervisor at pre-agreed intervals via mobile phone or radio.

- The use of a manually operated 'Personal Alarm Button' (PAB) that transmits an immediate automatic warning if activated by the user. Devices are available that automatically trigger a 'Man Down' warning if sensors indicate that the user has become suddenly immobile.

- The implementation of a robust system that ensure the person concerned has returned home or to base by a certain time.

A procedure is required to ensure clarity of vision and full understanding by all concerned of what needs to be done. The 5 W's apply: WHO? WHAT? WHEN? WHERE? WHY? The main vehicle for this is the site and person-specific arrangements that must accompany the Health & Safety Policy.

It is important that procedures are kept short and simple. Long-winded procedures are not easy to read, if they are not read, they are not applied and procedures that are

Photography courtesy of Gareth Roberts

about the author



Tom Searle is Managing Director of Britrisk Safety Limited which he formed in 2009. Britrisk helps businesses throughout the UK manage their safety risk. They have a particular expertise in the golf and land-based sector and are always pleased to offer advice and guidance.

In 2012, Britrisk acquired Jon Allbutt Associates thus providing the industry with a means of preserving Jon's valuable, specialist expertise.

Tom Searle – Managing Director Britrisk Safety Limited.
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not applied result in accidents.

Emergency procedures are critical. Once an accident has occurred, the recipient of the distress call needs to know clear essential facts. The person placing the call not only needs to be aware of the relevant emergency procedures but also the exact location of the accident. By virtue of the lone working scenario, this may not always be immediately obvious and critical time can be lost if the emergency services are not directed specifically to the scene via the most efficient and accessible route.

A method statement may be appropriate - a short document accompanying the risk assessment that describes the main aspects of the task and the sequence of events, including how the process of supervision will work.

So having identified the main elements of risk control, how can we pull together the vital communication process and ensure that everyone involved is kept fully briefed and processes refreshed? The answer lies primarily in 'Tool-box talks' (more familiar perhaps to workers in the construction industry).

Put the kettle on, pull up a few chairs around the table and let's talk through the main risks and controls. The older, more experienced hands should be initiating discussion and mentoring the young guns, particularly apprentice workers and other youngsters with less experience (and while we're on the subject, don't forget about the raised risks and obligations surrounding 'Young Persons'). Once again this should not be a long laborious process that impacts negatively on the busy working day, but taking one topic per week and spending 15 minutes on a designated topic is time well spent and a great investment in everyone's safety and well-being.

One final 'Quick Win' - use of the 'Dynamic risk assessment' process can be a great complement to written risk assessments and will assist in employees' own legal duties to take care of themselves and others.

Dynamic risk assessment may be defined as 'A continuous process of identifying risk, assessing it and coming up with ways to reduce or eliminate such risk'. It operates at systematic, strategic and dynamic levels and involves the concept

of a 'Safe person'. It was initially introduced by the fire service but may be extended to the workplace to supplement written documents.

This is a subject all of its own, but suffice it to say it is a process by which operatives continually assess risk as they carry out tasks. In this context it is not a written process and should be used to complement formal assessments.

For example, when cutting grass around a bunker an operative constantly rehearses questions such as:

What does my training and experience say about this job?

Is this bank too steep / too wet to be safe?

How could I injure myself doing this?

If this machine turned over NOW how would I summon help?

Does this task FEEL safe?

Finally, for further help on Lone Working take advantage of the best source of free health and safety guidance and support in the world. The HSE website contains a wealth of fully illustrated information - and it's free! Here is the link:

www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf

BASIS Explained



BASIS

Stephen Jacob, BASIS Business Development Manager, explains what BASIS is and why all turf managers should be involved in it

BASIS Training and Certification has been an industry standard for over 35 years. In that time the BASIS certificate became a statutory requirement for sellers, suppliers and advisers and has been retained in the new regulations, the Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012.

So who needs a BASIS certificate and why?

Greenkeepers who are applying pesticides or fertilisers to sports turf surfaces are required to hold the appropriate pesticide application (PA) certificate. And those who are advising on the use, selling or supplying of plant protection products for amenity turf are required to hold the BASIS Certificate in Crop Protection (Amenity grass and sports turf areas) and/or the FACTS Golf and Sports Turf Certificate if they are advising on fertiliser use.

New entrants to the industry can study the BASIS Foundation Award in Agronomy (Amenity). This foundation level course is a sound introduction to agronomy, integrated crop protection and crop nutrition. The foundation award is also an excellent course for greenkeepers who wish to know more about alternative methods to chemical applications and how to get the best from the products they are applying to their turf.

The Foundation Award has been particularly successful and for the third year running, a course has been held at BTME, trained by technical staff from the Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI) and sponsored by Sherriff Amenity, Bayer and Everris.

Many candidates take the Foundation Award to improve their knowledge to a level where they can have informed conversations with their sales representative. For others it serves as a preliminary course for the BASIS Certificate in Crop Protection (Amenity grass and sports turf areas).

The BASIS certificate in Crop Protection-Amenity Horticulture for field, sales and technical staff (FSTS), is the national qualification for all those advising on the use, selling or supplying of plant protection products in the amenity industry. This includes contractors, distributors and plant protection products manufacturers.

It also incorporates all suppliers, consultants, course managers and local authority managers involved in pesticide sales or advice.

During the 12 days that training

typically takes for the full crop protection course, you will learn how to recognise the major weeds, pests and diseases that are commonly found in sports turf and also about their lifecycles in order to ensure that control measures are justified both from an economical and integrated point of view.

Further course modules cover the composition and activity of pesticides, application procedures including the safe storage, handling and transportation of pesticides and finally the impact of amenity activities on biodiversity, the environment and water.

Candidates are required to sit an examination at the end of the training which will assess their level of knowledge and experience within the sports turf industry. Successful candidates will receive a certificate of competence and are then eligible to join the BASIS Amenity Register (BAR).

Due to the practical nature of the training we do recommend that prospective candidates have at least 12 months prior experience within the industry.

If you have more of an interest in ensuring that your sports turf has the optimum nutrient balance and that fertiliser products are being applied in the most effective manner and in compliance with UK legislation, the FACTS (Golf and Sports Turf) certificate is the course for you.

FACTS is an independent non-statutory Certification Scheme for advisers and sellers within the fertil-

about the author



Stephen Jacob

Stephen is employed as the Business Development Manager of BASIS Registration Ltd. Prior to joining BASIS three years ago Stephen was employed as a Farm Business Consultant and before that he worked in seed production and plant breeding for a number of multinational companies.

iser industry. It was established in 1993 following discussions with the trade associations connected with the industry and BASIS.

At the present time there is no legal requirement for advisers and sellers to be certificated; however it was considered that setting up such a scheme was the responsible action to take in light of the environmental pressures on the industry and increasing technical requirements. The Scheme and initiative are fully supported by Defra, the Environment Agency and other organisations.

The FACTS syllabus is typically taught over five days and covers: the soil or playing surface in relation to turfgrass nutrition; nature and properties of fertilisers and liming materials; plant nutrients and the basis of choice of fertilisers; transport, storage, handling and application of fertilisers and codes of good practice and legal and other environmental protection measures.

All fertiliser staff who sell and give advice are strongly recommended to obtain a Certificate of Competence within three years of entering the industry, during which time they should be working under the supervision of a qualified member of staff and again we strongly recommend that candidates have industry experience prior to sitting the course.

All BASIS courses are accredited through Harper Adams University to ensure that they are of the highest educational standard. Once qualified, advisers are further required

to demonstrate their competence by way of Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

Professional advisers are encouraged to join the BASIS Amenity Register (BAR) which maintains confidential records of members' CPD activity and enables them to demonstrate a record of continued learning and show that their knowledge is up to date. To maintain membership of the BAR, members must accrue 20 CPD points per annum for full member status which is equal to 10 – 20 hours of CPD activity.

Members of the BAR gain both internal and external recognition that the individual is a member of independent professional CPD scheme which provides evidence that they are compliant with the requirements of EU law.

Where are training courses held?

All training is conducted by BASIS Approved Trainers, details of which can be found on the BASIS website.

How do I apply to take a BASIS training course?

Contact one of the BASIS Approved Trainers directly for information regarding the dates and cost of their next training course.

If you require any additional information, please feel free to contact me directly: stephen@basis-reg.co.uk or visit our website: www.basis-reg.co.uk

Over the course of 2014 keep an eye out for more educational BASIS articles, watch this space!





From seaway to fairway

One of the jewels in the UK's golf crown is undoubtedly The Alwoodley Golf Club. Steve Castle spoke to Course Manager Philip Taylor to discover how the Club's recent five-year restoration and ecological plans have come to fruition – and how a twist of fate led him towards a career in greenkeeping

PROFILE

Name: Philip Taylor
Role: Course Manager
Born: Hessle, 19 November 1953
Handicap: Hasn't played for 3 years
Hobbies: Shooting, fast cars and sailing

KEY EQUIPMENT

2 John Deere Fairway Mowers
4 Toro Greenmaster 1000
1 Toro GR3400
2 Toro Workman
1 Toro 3150 Petrol
2 Toro Greenmaster 3250
2 Toro Bunker Rake
Plus many others - most importantly an excellent team!



One of the first phrases I heard Course Manager Philip Taylor use in connection with Alwoodley was “it’s a very important golf course” and the evidence certainly supports this. In 1907 it was the first to be designed by Alister MacKenzie who was also the Secretary at the West Yorkshire club and famously went on to design Augusta National.

It maintains a constantly high presence in every ‘Top 100 UK Courses’ list you care to read and is also regularly described as one of the toughest in the UK with its unforgiving gorse and heather swallowing up errant shots which narrowly miss the tight fairways. It has hosted the British Seniors

Open, the Weetabix Ladies Challenge, the English Amateur, the Ladies British Open Amateur Championships, among countless other events.

The greenkeeping team have been heavily involved in two major five-year plans (one agronomic, one ecological) running in tandem. The first was a course improvement plan focusing on bunker restoration, installing new championship tees and putting in some new bunkers similar to those that were in place in MacKenzie’s original design. For the first three years the greenkeeping team worked alongside contractors before completing the vast majority of the agronomic work themselves during the last two years.

Philip said: “We needed an archi-

tect who would be sympathetic to MacKenzie and the course’s original design. Now, we didn’t want the course to return to exactly how it was 100 years ago, because obviously that wouldn’t be acceptable now, but we wanted a return to the distinctive style of MacKenzie.

“The bunkers – we have around 100 – all needed updating, they had become quite sterile over the years as they have been changed on spec rather than with any coherent strategy. We wanted to enlist the services of an architect who would not only plan the project but would be hands-on with it too, and we went for Ken Moodie. He really has got involved and even helped with some raking!”

Plans were drawn up and a presentation night was held for the





membership. The plans were discussed in detail and the members voted in favour.

Philip said: “We started on the work each year in October after the final large corporate day at the end of the season and we generally wanted that year’s work to be finished by Christmas. Occasionally we had to close some holes, which was not ideal even in the middle of winter but the members thoroughly understood that the work was being done for them.

“One particularly difficult hole to work on was the 11th, which is a short hole at the very end of the course and after the wettest summer on record, we worked on that hole using boards. The staff worked very hard and the work was a total success, given the difficulty

of the logistics of getting materials to the site and the waste off the site.”

Philip has been Course Manager at Alwoodley for 25 years and he has overseen plenty of work in that time. 15 years ago, all the greens were lifted and relaid to USGA spec. During that period, the entire course was also re drained although Alwoodley, which sits just north of Leeds, is on a predominantly clay base which has good natural drainage.

Philip confirmed “we hollow tine in spring, mini hollow tine in August and spike monthly for the rest of the year. We like to cut by hand where possible, although obviously we don’t have the manpower to do this daily. I just think it looks better and it rolls as well as it cuts. We’re currently cutting

at 6mm with the hand machines, and we will go down to 3.5mm in summer or possibly 3mm with a Triplex.”

The second five-year plan focused on ecological matters, and the Club employed the expertise of STRI’s Bob Taylor. They mainly concentrated on heather restoration and woodland management.

“It’s a heathland course, so obviously we try to preserve this. We try to restore heather by stripping the turf and thatch off the surface down to the black layer where the heather seeds are held. Eventually, and hopefully, within two to five years we will get new heather growth coming in.

“Part of my interview for this job was to play a round with a Committee member. We were heading



ABOVE: Steve Bennett, Ben Robertson, Chris Hall, Tim Minns, Matthew Brightman, Neil Horton, Philip Taylor

down the 5th and he said to me “we need to get rid of these trees”. It was a pine tree-lined fairway which I actually liked, so I was wondering if it was a trick question! I asked him why he would want to remove them. He replied “we don’t want to end up as a parkland course, we’re a heathland course” – and he was right. When the pines came down, you could see right across the heath with the beautiful heather and gorse and it was much improved.

“It is important to keep the work going in a consistent manner. Five year plans are very useful, so you end up having a balanced approach to your work and tick boxes as you progress over the years. It also means you have clear evidence to take to your committee and members to answer questions on what you’ve done and what’s still to do.”

It is clear the ecological work is encouraging local wildlife. On the morning of my visit, Philip revealed he had seen four deer and a red kite in the woodland on the course.

The clubhouse where we chatted featured a quirky circular dining room – and it was a quirky twist of fate that led Philip to embark on his greenkeeping career. But for a failed eye test, he could have spent his life on the high seas.

“I trained to be a river pilot at nautical college at Trinity House Nautical College but my eyesight wasn’t good enough. I wear contact

lenses which would be okay now, but in those days you had to have 20:20 vision to be accepted on the boats.”

“So I left to work as a greenkeeper on the site of the old Hessle Golf Club, before the Humber Bridge was constructed on it. I knew many of the members as I’d been a member there since I was 12 so it seemed natural to get a job there initially.”

“Obviously it was so different then. We cut the greens once a week, the wages were poor and there was no career progression – well, certainly not at that club anyway. So I went down to Kingston-upon-Thames and worked at the Holme Park Golf Club which was in the grounds of Hampton Court Palace before a spell at Beaconsfield Golf Club. I then got my first Head Greenkeeper’s role at Farnham Park Golf Club, then moved on to York Golf Club and had eight fantastic years there before moving to Alwoodley. I always used to say I would never work on the same golf course for more than seven or eight years, and of course I’ve ended up here for 25! I’ve been very fortunate.”

Philip does not have any greenkeeping qualifications in common with most greenkeepers of his generation, although he is fully qualified in seamanship and navigation! He has always been

particularly keen to impress the importance of training on his team. Alwoodley Deputy, Neil Horton, is working towards his Level 4 and another team member is on Level 2.

The Club are now looking forward to hosting the Yorkshire Amateur Championship later this year and the English Amateur Championship in 2015.

Philip concluded: “It’s a fantastic place to work, people tend to stay here for years. Everything we’ve done, we’ve done together. It’s all about a team here, and that includes all members of staff in all departments of the Club. We have carried out an awful lot of work over past years and it has undoubtedly been worth it, not to mention a privilege.”

