



# Weathering the Impacts of Weather

*What's with the weather this year! It seems as if the entire PGA Tour event schedule has been altered this spring, right along with the Masters. Heavy snowfall this April in Michigan cost golf courses dearly. Not to mention that Mother Nature took its toll on golf greens and fairways this past winter across the upper Midwest.*

*Ultimately, in most years, the good and bad weather even out and revenues and expenses do the same.*

Weather is, without a doubt, our number-one variable, and how golf facilities approach weather in daily operations, project deadlines and rain-check policies can be the difference-maker to the bottom line.

Historically, attempts have been made to soften the adverse affects of weather. As cart fees became an integral part of the revenue stream, wall-to-wall cart paths became affordable and allowed cart traffic on paths when the course is saturated. And with the growth of golf and the need for increasing revenue streams during the 1990s, golf facilities were also able to spend monies on storm retention and drainage to help reduce the effects of flooding. In addition, weather programs that include lightning detection have made golf courses a safer place while offering detailed up-to-the-minute information to assist scheduling efforts.

Recently, talk of weather is more directly revenue-related, specifically having to do with rain-check policies and golfer perception with regards to weather reports. In tight economic times, golf facilities are softening their rain-check policies to persuade golfers to play during potentially inclement weather. Several members of the National Golf Course Owners Association have been meeting with weather forecasters to clarify weather forecasts. One example would be a rainy forecast for Saturday. The golfer perception is all-day misery and he neglects to make a tee time. On Saturday, it actually rains for only two hours in the morning. If the weather forecast was for the best chance of rain to be in the early morning and eventual clearing, a tee time may have been booked. The combined impact of more favorable weather forecasting and liberal rain-check policies will help revenue streams during wet weather.

Ultimately, in most years, the good and bad weather even out and revenues and expenses do the same. However, what can be devastating is prolonged or severe weather. These events can seriously jeopardize a golf facility, especially during tight economic times. More and more clubs are considering or have taken insurance policies to cover financial losses due to extreme weather.

And with the changing weather coming this summer, historical records and notes become great tools to prepare your facility for budget increases or variances. How will water and labor expenses change should we approach prolonged dry weather like that of 1988? Or what would be some strategies to inform pesticide variances should we encounter the humidity and heat of 1995? One should consider a heads-up to managers and green chairmen should we continue to experience weather not unlike 1995, when the plant protectant budget increased threefold.

*(continued on page 34)*

with on establishing better working relations with both media and the public.

I gained a lot of ideas that could improve others' awareness of us and enhance this chapter's visibility, for instance:

- Adding GCSAA or MAGCS logo on your course's scorecard next to your name.
- Inviting sports media to your course to play golf or holding a sports media tournament with superintendents.
- Implementing a First Tee program or putting course for kids; inviting teachers/professors, having a five-minute education at each hole, talking about IPM.
- Inviting city commissioners to your maintenance shop for a shop/course tour.

Both Luke and I also met with Jeff Bollig, GCSAA public relations officer, about what steps are needed to get our Committee going. As of now, we (as a chapter) are taking baby steps, thanks to Tony Kalina who

started last year in sending out press releases on a timely basis; hopefully I will keep this going and try to build momentum. Jeff Bollig had some good suggestions, including that our chapter build a media list and attach this list to the Midwest Family Tree. We could send our directory to the media, including phone numbers. We need to stay on top of news releases and get all information from all our members on golf events at their clubs. We should also keep pumping the local newspapers, try to get help from CDGA and USGA, write turf tips, perhaps send the "Super-n-Site" article from each *On Course* to the facility's local newspaper. We might solicit college interns who understand media and public relations to aid with this committee and Luke Cella. Another avenue for our enhanced visibility is the Illinois Green Industry; Luke Cella is strongly involved with this along with being a GCSAA advisor for Executive Officers.

Personally, we all can get involved by being visible in the pro

shop and attending local events, social activities and church. Remember, we are trying to reach the other 90% of the people THAT don't play golf. Reaching out to our #1 resource and the future of the game—our kids—by educating them, makes our jobs more fun and ultimately easier.



**Weathering . . . (continued from page 3)**

With all the adversity experienced by a weather-dependent industry, it is no wonder that we have developed so many ways to lessen weather's effects on scheduling, revenue and safety of our patrons. I'm sure the year 2005 will throw a few weather curves our way, but we can all be glad we have many tools at our disposal with which to cope.



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