

Teaching Technicians: From a Chicago-area Meeting Group to a Leader in National Seminars

For 23 years, turf technicians have from various parts of the green industry have been coming together as members of Turf Equipment Technicians Association (TETA). What historically began as the Chicagoland Golf Course Mechanics Association (CGCMA), TETA learned from its early struggles and grew to be a strong body today.

TETA is comprised of technicians from park districts, forest preserves, athletic fields, turf equipment dealers, distributors and predominately golf courses. How they came together starts with a one man.

It was January 1983, at a Chicagoland Golf Course Superintendents Association annual shop tour a brave, nervous golf course mechanic asked for everyone's attention. He proposed that the golf course mechanics come together and create an association.



Front roll left to right: George Klein, Walla Walla Community College; Jim Letourneau, Foley United; Mark Nelson, Briggs & Stratton Corp; Wes Danielewicz, Executive Director TETA, Maple Meadows G.C.; Back roll, left to right: Bill Hughes, Turftech Online; Joe Prestwood, Toro Co.; Glenn Peters, TETA, Sunset Ridge C.C.; Ted Soenksen, TETA, Wilmette G.C.; Matt Passantino, TETA, Stonebridge C.C.

His name was John McGuire from Sunset Ridge Country Club. McGuire went on to say, he felt it would be great for mechanics to get together each month to discuss any issue specific to equipment or mechanical experience of repairing equipment. His goal was to be able to visit each other's shop and see the different ways that shop was set up, equipped, etc. These were the first meetings.

A few months later, golf course mechanics from all over Chicagoland met and voted on the name, "Chicagoland Golf Course Mechanics Association." Officers and directors were elected, McGuire president, membership dues were set at \$15 per year and so began the first ever golf course mechanics association in the Chicago area.

Records indicate that in 1986 there were 28 paid members with the expectation of membership increasing

to 60 in 1987. Although the membership did increase, it did not reach 60 paid members until 1990, at which point membership went up to 84 mechanics. In 1989, by-laws were introduced, voted on and approved by the membership, they remained the same for five years.

In 1994, the name changed to the Turf Equipment Technicians Association and at the same time the membership voted to expand its membership to a national level. Although TETA has members from the east to west coast, the membership is concentrated in the Chicagoland area.

Only 16 percent of the current paid membership is from outside Illinois, 95 percent of the membership is from golf courses the remaining percentage is made up of park districts, distributors or dealers. The membership continues to grow each year with the possibility of creating chapters in other regions across the nation.

The mission of TETA is to promote the image, stature, reputation and skills of the professional turf equipment industry technician. This is accomplished by offering monthly educational seminars for the membership. Attendees benefit from these seminars not just from the educational content but also from the interaction of other fellow technicians.



TETA members at an educational forum.

Gathering technicians creates a network of information beyond comprehension – likely beyond McGuire's original aspirations. Seminar topics span from the basics of engine, electrical, hydraulic repair and diagnostics to getting the optimum cut from your mowers. A seminar normally begins with a continental breakfast followed by introduc-

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tions of speakers and then education begins. Lunch is served and a short business meeting follows, time permitting. These seminars are put on at no cost to members.

TETA has tried so hard in the past to have representatives of equipment manufacturers come and do these educational seminars. Lately it has been extremely difficult for them to commit to presenting for the association.

Hope for the future of TETA involves having the ability to conduct presentations of its own, ones that are not brand specific and still accomplish the educational need of the members. More hands-on presentations and seminars would help in the taking of the Equipment and Engine Training Council (EETC) Certification Tests are just some of the things to come as TETA approaches its silver anniversary.

TETA is a supporter of the EETC. The EETC is an organization of equipment and engine manufacturers, distributors, dealers, trade schools, high schools and trade associations that are committed to reducing the shortage of equipment technicians. It is the council that writes the certification exams for equipment technicians.

TETA is currently involved in the Reel Technology Certification Test under the Turf Committee. You can find out more by visiting www.eetc.org.


For eight, consecutive years TETA has presented educational sessions at the GCSAA National Conference and Show, now known as Golf Industry Show. It has consistently presented educational sessions at the ITF's Illinois Professional Turfgrass Conference (IPTC). Sitting on the



TETA shop tours and hands on demonstration.

IPTC educational committee, TETA plans to continue to use this conference as a means to educate its membership.

Conducting educational seminars is not the only benefit TETA has for its members. TETA offers members employment referral opportunities; resume services; a network of turf equipment technicians with answers to an array of turf equipment questions and if they do not have the answers, they can find someone who does.

A large majority of members are some of the founding members of this association. With their support and the support from others who believe being a turf equipment technician is the career for them, TETA will continue to be a part of the green industry. 

SERVICE TIPS

Subject:

John Deere Pro Gator 2020 with gas engine

Problem:

Hard to remove spark plug boot from engine

Solution:

First work a small screw driver around the outside diameter of the spark plug boot. Spray some liquid grease such as Zep 2000 down around boot and remove. Before reinstalling, use some dielectric grease around the diameter of the boot. This will allow for the spark plug boot to be removed with ease the next time.

Submitted by: Brian Eilrich
Glenview Park District Golf Club
Director, TETA

The Service Tips submitted are strictly the opinion of the submitter and are not that of the Manufacturer.

Subject:

Bedknife replacement

Problem:

Rust on threads of bedbar/excess anti-seize used
A long, long time ago someone gave a mechanic an idea to use anti-seize on the threads of the bedknife screw. This was feasible except when the mechanic decided to use it he thought that more would be better. By using an excess amount of anti-seize you are not helping in any way. In fact you may be causing the bedknife to actually bow out wherever you have a screw.

Solution:

If you are using anti-seize for the sole purpose of ease of removal of the screws then when replacing the bedknife, I suggest trying some Loctite #272 (the blue stuff) on the threads instead. Begin by making sure the threads are free of dirt and oil. Apply a small amount of Loctite #272 on the threads of the screw and torque to manufacturer's specification. Loctite is an anaerobic and coats the threads. The lack of oxygen prevents rust from forming. Removal is just as easy as with anti-seize.

Submitted by: Wes Danielewicz
Maple Meadows Golf Course
Executive Director, TETA