



# South Florida Sunshine



By BRAD G. KOCHER  
Inverrary Country Club

## The Hub of the Operation -- 'The Maintenance Complex'

What is it that every Golf Course Superintendent has but is generally dissatisfied with? You have guessed it — his maintenance complex. Most of the existing complexes are antiquated, poorly planned and stuck somewhere at one end of the golf course. Some have dirt floors, small and inadequate storage areas and little consideration for mechanics repair area. Storage of equipment, employees lunch rooms, decent restrooms and office space are often overlooked when maintenance facilities are constructed during development.

Several avenues concerning maintenance complexes will be explored. Since there are few courses presently under construction in the South Florida area, we will look at improvements that can be made to existing facilities along with basic necessities for every complex.

The basic reason for the maintenance complex is that it should function as the hub of golf course and/or grounds maintenance activities. It is generally the area where all or most of the equipment is stored and maintained. It is also the area where all employees report to work, eat lunch and clean up before leaving work. At many complexes, it is the area where company equipment is fueled, nurseries are housed, pump stations located and an array of other activities often take place.

Basic necessities dictate that the maintenance complex houses around \$200,000-\$250,000 worth of equipment for each 18-hole course. In most situations the equipment is housed inside, however if equipment is stored outside, it should be under some form of overhead cover.

Foul weather is a major contributor to rust and rotting of equipment. With such large monetary investments in equipment, a little care will make the equipment last longer and look better. Also, employees tend to take better care of equipment that "looks new," and golfers prefer to see equipment on the course that is not rusted and weather beaten. Well kept equipment exudes care and professionalism.

The area where equipment is stored and fueled should be paved. Any time there is a lot of traffic, equipment makes an absolute mess in non-paved areas. It is hazardous both to employees and the equipment. Additionally on the outside of the building, other flammable materials should be stored such as oils and mineral spirits.

The inside area and arrangement are probably the most important facet of the maintenance complex. Included inside should be superintendent, assistant and head

mechanic office space. Restrooms, employee lockers, shower and lunch room areas should also be included but are probably the most overlooked areas in some of the older maintenance "barn" designs. Bag fertilizer, chemical room, parts storage and equipment storage are the other items that will need to be considered when arranging the maintenance complex.

Adequate office space is crucial to the satisfactory performance of the golf course superintendent, yet too often we see a desk in a 6 x 8 office with no provision for file cabinets and other record-keeping necessities. In these days of budgets of \$300,000 on up, efficient management of men, money and machines is increasingly important, and the Superintendent must be an organized record-keeper to do his job justice. The age of the mini-computer is here and will soon be an important ingredient in golf course management and will enable us to perform more efficiently. Additionally, desk and storage space should be provided for the assistant and the head mechanic. Each of these positions requires routine maintenance record-keeping, inventories and ordering. Additionally, the mechanic must have storage space for parts manuals and parts inventory lists.

Employee related facilities are often the most overlooked in the maintenance complex. We should all remember that our employees are the backbone of the operation and that their needs and comforts are infinitely important. Employees spend 8+ hours a day at their job and they should be made to feel that their needs are as important as ours. Every maintenance employee should have some sort of locker or storage area. Changes of clothes, dry shoes, rainwear and boots are items that should be stored there. Proper restroom facilities should be adequate for crew size and inspected and cleaned daily. At least one shower should be provided. Lunch rooms with enough space for all employees should be available and air conditioned — fans at the least. All employees will be most appreciative and will feel part of the team if we respond to their needs.

Chemical storage is another important area of the complex. The chemical storage room should be adequately sized to handle as many chemicals as you would ever have on hand. The room should be locked at all times when not in use. A label should be on the door stating "Danger" or "Danger Toxic Chemicals." Adequate ventilation should be provided in the chemical room. Also, an emergency eye flush and running water should be very near. Chemical splashed in the eyes or on the skin must be dealt with quickly.

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Parts storage facilities are another consideration in proper maintenance building floorplans. It is a necessity to keep sizable inventories in parts in order to readily repair downed equipment. Many courses, especially 18-hole courses, have limited amounts of "back-up" equipment to utilize when an important piece of machinery is down. Therefore, parts must be on hand to reduce downtime and put the equipment back into service. An organized parts room is an integral part of the present day maintenance facility.

Often, granular fertilizers must also be stored in the maintenance area. Depending on the preferred amounts of inventory, we must allow adequate space to store the fertilizers. We must also have room to move fork lifts in and out of the area because it is much neater to stack the fertilizer on pallets. In that manner, the fertilizer stays dry and can be stacked one pallet on top of the other.

Equipment storage must also be considered. Usually the small equipment is kept inside such as green and tee mowers, trap rakes, utility vehicles, small walking mowers, mid-size rotary and reel mowers, weed eaters, etc. Neat arrangement will allow for an organized shop area and less damage to equipment. Marking of the floor with paint helps in many situations.

The maintenance complex of the 80's will be designed differently from one 20-30 years ago. If superintendents can update their "barns" of yesterday they will ultimately have a better operation. Employees will be happier, mechanics will have suitable work areas and the total maintenance operation will run more effectively. ■

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