



Palm Beach Trade Winds



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Those professionals outside the realm of the Golf Course industry fail to visualize the volatile position of a golf course manager. Just when you believe you have the golf course in the most superb condition within your ability, devastation strikes; disease, floods, frost or even a hurricane. What is perhaps the most immediate catastrophe which might occur? Answer: A fire to the golf course maintenance building complex! Many natural causes you can not control and you will just have to endure fate. Fire you can control! Fire safety is just a part of a good manager's complete program.

An insurance agent once asked me if I had a fire policy for the gas tanks, if they were to catch on fire? I said, "Yeah — run like Hell!" There is no way I would tackle a 3,000-gallon gasoline fire with a small fire extinguisher. I once witnessed the explosion of a 10,000-gallon gasoline semi-tanker on I-95. A massive eruption which was horrible to see as the driver could not escape; the truck remains were hauled away on just the back of a truck and a three-foot hole had burned through the pavement. The bottom line: respect fire, set up a realistic program to save lives and make sure you have performed as many safety precautions as conceivable.

Imagine if a fire was to destroy your maintenance building tonight. How would you cope with tomorrow? True, you might borrow some equipment from fellow superintendents, vendors would lend assistance and hopefully insurance would recoup the cost incurred, however, the ball is still in your court. Did you perform every safety precaution? To put up a few "No Smoking" signs just won't cut it. Installing several \$10.00 smoke detectors is hardly an improvement. Considering within a golf course maintenance building, fixed assets can exceed a half a million dollars, a complete fire alarm system should be a part of the basics, which can be monitored along with an alarm system by independent security companies, or better yet, an in-house security system, more commonly found on development projects.

Let us first examine the situation. Imagine the liability within the building. The basic necessities within will include dozens of petroleum combustible engines, gasoline cans, oil drums, flammable golf course pesticides, various items of general storage, the building structure itself, and

yes, the bomb outside — your fuel tanks! A thorough fire alarm system needs to accurately monitor the situation, notify appropriate authorities within a short period of time in order to remedy the problem before the situation is a total loss.

Upon my recent evaluations for a thorough fire safety program and a proper monitoring system, I contacted our local Boca Raton Fire Department. Fire Inspector Robert Diaz enlightened me upon the fact that fire codes are only a minimum standard set by law. "One should always consider exceeding the standards. Evaluate products on the market, consult your local fire inspector, and decide just how extensive you can afford to go. More than likely, the additional cost spent for safety devices will reap less expensive insurance rates. One can cut corners, however, the calculated gamble seldom proves beneficial."

The system should not only employ smoke alarms, but also heat sensors which fulfill a specific purpose. For example, a smoke alarm would commonly false alarm near the mechanics' repair area where welding and torches can produce misleading smoke trace. A "Rate of Rise Heat Sensor" mounted on the ceiling can monitor heat exceeding 132 degrees F. — a temperature obviously depicting a fire. This type of device operates exclusively upon the expansion of heat. As a fire spreads quickly, a sudden temperature change would occur. Just a normal heat sensor may false alarm under hot summer conditions, whereas a quick temperature change simulates a fire condition.

Smoke alarms would be very appropriate in offices where furniture and papers would quickly produce adequate smoke. Make sure all areas are monitored: offices, employees' room, restrooms, storage rooms, and the storage areas where equipment is stored. The best type of smoke detector is the photo-electric, which operates on the property of monitoring a pencil beam of light. This design is long lasting, and false alarms are uncommon due to the effective design. The ionization smoke detector can more commonly false alarm and are usually of a lesser expense and quality. A photo-electric smoke detector combined with the Rate of Rise Heat Sensors can provide an excellent monitoring system, if incorporated within their respective areas of best design for performance.

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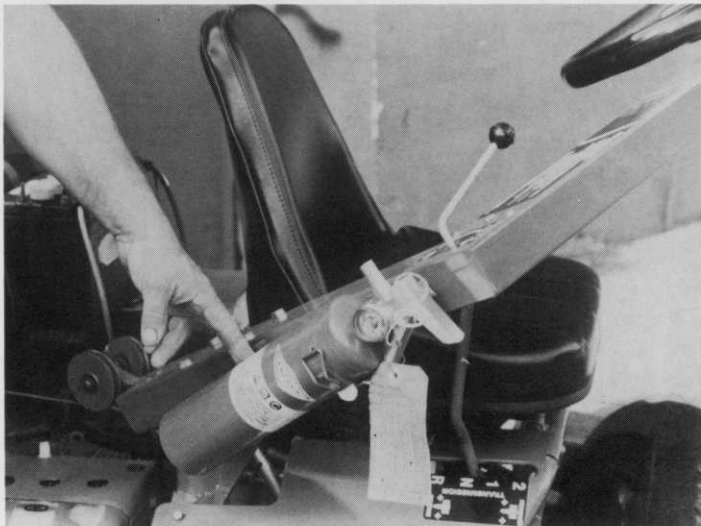
As for the outside bomb, the fuel tanks need an electrical emergency cut off switch, far away from the potential flame, so the pumps can be turned off in case of an emergency. This could aid in the prevention of spreading spilled fuel. Of course, the tanks should be buried underground and constructed of fiberglass rather than metal to prevent rusting and possible seepage. The fuel fill-up areas need proper ventilation, no smoking signs posted and strictly enforced within a 100-foot radius, and a fire extinguisher mounted within easy reach to put out a small machine fire. Once the machine's tank explodes, concede. Seek safety quickly, call the fire department immediately, and wait for the professionals. Mr. Diaz explains, "Your first response to a fire should be to call the fire department. The most common problem is the delayed tactic — a situation of being called too late. Most fires start small. If notified within a short period of time, most fires can be arrested. Once out of control, risk rises to unproportionate measures that can result in a total loss." Our most common thought is that I can put the fire out myself and I shouldn't bother the fire department for just a small little fire. The National Fire Prevention Code states by law, any "unfriendly fire" that occurs must be reported to the closest local jurisdictional fire department to be sure the fire is put out and recorded as being officially extinguished.

The fear of a fire is most commonly associated with the flame, however, more injurious to a person is smoke and its toxicity. Materials take on a different chemical make-up when being burned. This chemical reaction can transform somewhat non-fearful items into noxious fumes that can prove fatal. We often hear on national news of a railroad tanker car that has derailed, caught fire and nearby residents needing to be evacuated. Well, this is my same reaction with regard to our maintenance buildings. One of the most dreaded noxious fumes to inhale can be from the burning of Poly Vinyl

Chloride (PVC). Reactions to mucous membranes, lungs and the respiratory system can cause incurable symptoms, and can result in death. Because of this simple fear, if a maintenance building were to burn, I believe it would be best to totally clear the area, perhaps thousands of feet, in order to be totally clear of any possible noxious fumes.

Inspector Diaz explained a point to me with regard to the accidental burning of hazardous materials that brings a new wave of thought. A new concept of allowing a fire to burn itself out could very well change the design of maintenance buildings. The storage of such hazardous pesticides would be best stored in a separate building away from the center of the complex. For this reason, if a fire were to develop, rather than extinguishing the fire, it can prove to be far more economically sound to write off the fire loss rather than having to then deal with chemical clean-up. Inspector Diaz cited an instance where a chemical warehouse caught fire with a \$300,000 inventory. As a result Federal agencies required a total chemical clean-up which ultimately drove the company out of business. A high temperature fire can result in a clean burn-off, minimizing contaminated clean-up and prove to be economically more sound than trying to save the structure and its contents.

This past year I experienced a fire at the Clubhouse entrance sign. I ran into the Clubhouse whereupon I grabbed three extinguishers and I tried to put the fire out myself. I had already made the mistake. My efforts were in vain, as I thought I could put out the fire myself. I then had to go back to the Clubhouse to call 911. Within 7 minutes the fire department arrived. Within another 3 minutes the fire was extinguished. Wow, did I ever look like a fool. The sign was a total loss. True the fire wasn't my fault, however, a quicker phone call might have saved the situation. The next time you need help — call the professionals, but I hope it is your local golf pro and not your local fireman. ■



Fire extinguishers can be found on all pieces of golf course maintenance equipment at Quail Ridge Country Club.



The professionals, fireman suited in hazardous chemical outfit to combat most any situation.