



South Florida Sunshine



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Inverrary Country Club

Is Safety Part of Your Maintenance Program?

Each year corporate workplaces lose days and weeks of worktime due to employee sickness, absenteeism and on the job injury. Golf course maintenance operations can be hazardous to employees' well being if everyone involved does not make a conscious effort to be safety aware.

Despite diligent safety programs and conscientious employees — accidents can still happen.

It is the accident that arises out of inadequate safety programs, the negligent mishaps that are preventable and should concern us. It is the slippery floor, bald tires on equipment, exposed belts or lack of shields on power tools that cause accidents — preventable accidents.

It is important to have periodic meetings with your crew concerning safety. Crew members are generally the first to see pending safety problems, and if we have an open line of communication with our employees and encourage them to report safety violations or hazards, our accident losses will be minimized.

Even more important is that management follows up on any and all observations made by employees. Employees have to know that we will do something about safety problems — and do it quickly. There should be a sense of urgency about rectifying

hazards, and if there is not, employees will sense that we may not care about their safety, or are a little lax in getting the problem solved.

An attitude must be created and perpetuated that management cares about its employees' safety. In this manner, it becomes a group effort and all eyes are looking to the same objective.

Safety should be an open topic for discussion at any meeting held with employees and should also be mentioned specifically. In addition, there should be semi-annual safety inspections done in the shop, on the equipment and on the golf course.

In the shop, all electrical connections should be inspected. Look for loose or frayed wires and wires that should be in conduit. There are city and county codes that specify how electrical connections must be made, however, many shops were built before many of these codes went into effect, and even though your shop may not be governed by some of the newer requirements an update should be performed.

Fire is one of the major safety hazards that can be prevented. Ask for an inspection by your local fire department. They will tell you if you have enough fire extinguishers, if they are properly marked and

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spaced, and if they are the right type. They also will look at electrical connections, flammable liquids and potential hazards from sparks, and give a written recommendation.

A lot of people may be reluctant to have a fire inspection and feel that all of their recommendations may cost a great deal of money. Granted, deficiencies may cost one hundred dollars or a thousand. Add the price of all the equipment that is in the shop on a given day, plus all the mechanics tools, and shop equipment that you would be without if you had a fire, and you will see it is well worth it. There are several golf course maintenance operations that have experienced a devastating fire and I am sure that replacing the equipment was the easiest problem to solve after the fire.

Equipment should also be inspected at regular intervals. Operators should check their equipment for potential safety problems daily. Mechanics should include a safety inspection when they perform weekly or monthly fluid or filter changes.

Bald tires, steering problems and inadequate brakes are areas that can be the most hazardous to operators and even to innocent bystanders. A piece of equipment that goes out of control can end up in a lake or injure people in nearby golf carts. Our equipment frequently travels many of the same paths as the golfers and a sudden breakage of equipment could be disastrous.

Other equipment problems to look for are worn or frayed wires that could spark near the gas tank or ignite excess oil on the engine block. Buildup of oil or grease on the engine not only is a fire hazard, but decreases engine life because the engine runs hotter.

On the course, safety hazards not only involve employees, but also golfers. Low hanging branches have hit many people in the face or eyes and have also damaged exhaust pipes and golf cart roof tops. Look at golf cart and equipment routing. Are there blind spots? Patchwork should be done on worn cartpaths to prevent tires from dropping into ruts and losing control.

Safety should be an ongoing program. Too many times we fix problems after accidents happen. It is good that we respond to problems quickly, but too often the problem has existed long before the accident happened.

Most of our maintenance programs on equipment include preventative maintenance. Frequent greasing and oil changes are part of a good preventative maintenance schedule. Maybe we should also add a preventive safety maintenance program to our maintenance vocabulary. It can only help to make everyone safety aware. ■

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