

# Treasure Coast "Tide"ings

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## Playing It Safe at Martin Downs

Working on a golf course maintenance crew is very often taken lightly from a safety standpoint which can be very dangerous and extremely costly to your club. Higher insurance rates, lost man hours and possible lawsuits can result from unsafe working habits. As golf course superintendents, we have a responsibility to initiate and carry out a sound safety program that will avoid injuries and other major catastrophies.

At Martin Downs, an expansive development with 36 holes of golf in Stuart, operation and employee safety have been given top priority. Bill Mangold, Golf Course Superintendent, regularly holds employee meetings and safety is usually a major topic of conversation. I have invited Bill to share his safety program, which includes employee safety, equipment safety, chemical safety and fire hazards, with the readers of THE FLORIDA GREEN.

### Employee Safety

Bill opened our interview by stating, "An employee's safety is sometimes the hardest thing to get through to him. They will come up with all kinds of excuses on why they cannot conform to the rules. In most cases, that's all they are; excuses — with no real merit." Bill handles excuses firmly by stressing the importance of safety to all of his employees.

At Martin Downs, workers are required to wear hard toe shoes at all times. Sneakers, sandals and similar types of unsubstantial shoes are not permitted to be worn. Wearing rings, watches and bracelets are discouraged when they could catch on equipment and cause injury. Bill recommends that shirt-tails be tucked in and that pant legs be tucked

in boots or tied when working in situations where snagging of clothing is hazardous. Likewise, long hair is to be tied back to avoid snagging and obstruction of vision.

During regular employee meetings at Martin Downs, workers are constantly reminded safety — even things like the danger of cables or chains snapping when pulling out disabled equipment that may seem tedious, but could cause severe personal injury. Employees are encouraged to report any unsafe procedures or acts of other employees so that they may be put to rest for everyone's protection. Bill commented, "If you can strive to emphasize that the most important facet of safety is COMMON SENSE to your employees, accidents will be few and far between."

### Equipment Safety

Most accidents on the golf course involve equipment — either by mechanical failure or some fault of the operator. When asked to give his opinion on this fact, Bill Mangold replied, "Many times accidents happen when a new employee is put on a new piece of equipment for which he has not been properly trained. We cannot afford to take it for granted that he knows enough about a piece of equipment to operate it. We must go over it with him from head to toe and point out all features, especially those that pertain to safety." Bill continued, "After an accident occurs, it's very easy to blame the employee, but in fact it is our fault for not training him properly."

Some safety points that Bill stresses are: shut down equipment when fueling it, make sure not to overfill



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and spill fuel on equipment, make sure equipment is in neutral when starting, operate at a safe speed, shut off and apply brakes when getting off equipment, do not put hands or feet near moving parts and **REPORT ALL EQUIPMENT MALFUNCTIONS TO THE MECHANIC SO THEY CAN BE REPAIRED PROMPTLY!** Properly running equipment can be a very useful production tool; improperly it can be hazardous and costly.

In the event of an accident, always follow up with a detailed report to find the cause and follow up with guidelines to prevent future occurrence.

### Chemical Safety

Bill Mangold feels that the most important item in chemical safety is in the storage of chemicals. All golf courses should have a proper chemical storage room conforming to state regulations. It should be well ventilated and have an emergency shower in case of accidents. The chemical storage room should be marked as a restricted area and kept locked when not in use.

The superintendent should stress to the employees that they should not eat, smoke or drink when handling chemicals. Basic safety standards such as wearing respirators, gloves and boots, depending



Fueling Island at Martin Downs with approved fire extinguisher.



Periodically checking over equipment first hand with your mechanic will result in fewer mishaps due to failure.

on toxicity, are to be adhered to. Washing of employees and equipment after use are to be carried out.

Bill stated that any employee who handles pesticides on a regular basis should be State Certified. A certified employee will have more respect and use more care with chemicals. With all the bad publicity about chemicals lately, this is one area we must continue to monitor on a continuous manner.

### Fire Hazards

Fire has the potential for being the most devastating consequence of poor safety practices. Over the years, golf course superintendents have produced a good track record with respect to fire. Usually we hear of serious fire that has devastated clubhouses, but loss of maintenance buildings or equipment to fire is not as common. However, fire prevention must continue to play an integral part of overall golf course operations safety.

Fire extinguishers should be mounted on all large tractors and mowing units. A large buildup of dry grass in the radiators or behind shields is potential for fire that could result in loss of an expensive piece of equipment.

Also, fire extinguishers should be mounted by the chemical room, by the fuel pumps, and in the mechanic's work area. Another good practice is to strategically place extinguishers throughout the maintenance area in case of an emergency to contain fire before it can get out of hand.

Bill said that an important thing to keep in mind is that a fire extinguisher is no good to anyone if it is empty or if an employee does not know how to operate it properly. Make sure all employees know how to operate each type of fire extinguisher on hand and check them periodically to make sure that they are fully charged.

All flammable liquids should be kept in a safe place and all fuels stored in marked safety containers. A first aid kit with burn ointment should be readily available when needed. One should display phone numbers for emergency services and a doctor.

In closing our interview, I asked Bill if there was anything else that he would like to add to our discussion. He did have one more important item to dwell on — and that is the use of alcohol or other drugs during working hours. At Martin Downs, it is company policy to terminate any employee who is caught drinking or working under the influence. This policy has been adopted with employee safety in mind because accidents will happen if an employee's senses and judgment are impaired.

Bill reminded me that we have only covered a small percentage of operations safety. Safety is something that can never be put to rest or dwelled on deeply enough. As we continue to upgrade our operations, we will always spot something that needs attention from a safety standpoint. ■