

# The public should know how we are regulated

By Matthew R. Taylor, CGCS

Many folks think golf courses use water, fertilizer and pesticides wantonly. The general public has no idea what kinds of rules, regulations and inspections that golf courses are subject to as a routine matter of conducting business.

Here is a summary of all the checks and balances and regulatory authorities that dictate how we operate our golf courses. We may be unique on some items at Royal Poinciana, but most are pretty much standard for any operation.

## **COLLIER COUNTY POLLUTION CONTROL**

Because we sit on or near some of the well fields for the county, we must be inspected each year and be given a Certificate of Occupancy. Not many other golf courses in Collier County have this same requirement.

The county reviews our records on disposal of batteries, tire, oil, hydraulic fluids and any accumulated used fuel. They also review our fuel storage tanks and chemical mix-load buildings.

## **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND COLLIER COUNTY**

Our fuel tanks each year must be inspected and certified that they are in proper working order.

## **FDEP AND CITY OF NAPLES**

The reclaimed irrigation water we receive from the city is regulated by both authorities. FDEP mandates where it can be stored to make sure it is not discharged off our property. The river that runs on the western border of the property is monitored with flow meters on the north and south end.

FDEP also requires the signage around the lakes, on the 1st and 10th tees, and on the scorecard. FDEP has also required that the city drill one monitoring well next to the irrigation lake on front nine of the Pines Course to be certain that reclaimed water is not migrating into the groundwater nearby.

## **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES (FDACS)**

Regulates pesticide use. FDACS requires that someone on the property be licensed in the safe and proper application of pesticides and that person is the applicator of record. Others may apply materials under his/her license. In our case that is me. We require that all assistants, second assistants, IPM manager and most all applicators have been licensed to apply materials safely. FDACS makes inspections to check records of applications to make sure we are complying with the labeled uses of the products. FDACS also inspects the general safe handling, application and storage of chemicals.

## **SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT (SFWMD)**

Monitors the quantity of irrigation water used. Each month we must document how much water has been used, and then the totals must be submitted to the district quarterly. Our permit specifies how much water we may use in a year. During water restrictions, we must report our pumpage weekly. We are currently on Phase II or a 30-percent reduction.

According to the South Florida Water Management District, golf courses only use 2.3 percent of the water compared to 48 percent for agriculture and 30 percent for public supply, half of which – or about 15 percent – is for outside watering.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP**

- We are a member of Audubon International's Cooperative Sanctuary program for Golf Courses, fully certified since 1995 and we re-certify every two years.

- Yearly enrollment American Compliance Technology's Gold Environmental Program. ACT is a private company that works with businesses on issues like hazardous waste clean-

up, and provides environmental consulting. We use their services for OSHA-type inspections twice per year. Every six months or so, we are inspected by one of their environmental compliance specialists who audits our facility from the parking lot to the record keeping. When a potential violation is found, it is documented. After the audit we are given a report that includes a photo of the violation. They will also cite the OSHA violation and what the fine would have been. We normally have a follow-up in 60 days to ensure we have taken care of any problems that are found.

## **WORKERS COMPENSATION INSURANCE**

- We are inspected approximately quarterly by Royal Poinciana's workers compensation insurance company to make sure we are in compliance with safe working practices.

- Internally our department has a safety committee which meets regularly. We also have monthly safety training including a video and short test afterwards. The training is in English and Spanish.

## **STAFF TRAINING**

Additional training required each year for all staff includes:

- Drug Free Workplace
- Sexual Harassment
- Violence in the Work place
- Hazardous Communication Training - reviews what is stored and applied here

- MSDS training - reviews how to read a Material Safety Data Sheet.

- Respirator training - for those who apply hazardous materials • Respirator fit testing - ensures that they can physically wear a respirator (For both of the above respirator categories, we bring someone in who is certified to train on this)

- Pesticide training - all licensed applicators must take continuing education classes to maintain their licenses.

A lot of safeguards are in place to monitor and ensure that our golf courses operate within the rules and regulations designed to ensure worker safety and environmental stewardship. ■