

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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INSIDE

Containing Problems

Recycling rinsate saves water and reduces the anxiety associated with clean-up 25

New Chemistry

A GCN special report focuses on new formulations and how they affect superintendents 36-41

The Public Arena

Is development in state parks the next public-access frontier, or is it one step too far? 70



MCNABB EARNS HIGHEST HONOR

Richard McNabb (right) is the latest to earn the prestigious Master Greenkeeper status. For story, see page 15.

COURSE MAINTENANCE

When & Stimp: Two uses and interpretations ... 15
Study finds fungicide runoff after heavy rains 17

COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Will Masters win jumpstart Coore/Crenshaw? ... 45
It's that time again: The GCN course listing 53

COURSE MANAGEMENT

Decision time nears for North American Golf 55
McLoughlin: Reliable feasibility tests needed 55

SUPPLIER BUSINESS

GCSAA pulls further out of Asia-Pacific 61
What's new in the marketplace? 66

GRADUATION REPORT

Trained irrigation techs, mechanics in demand

By PETER BLAIS

Shovel jockey. Wrench turner.

Not particularly flattering titles for the people who fill the roles of irrigation technician and turf equipment manager. But if educators, course managers and others have their way, *shovel jockey* and *wrench turner* could go the way of *greenkeeper* in the near future.

With superintendents increasingly strapped to their desks by administrative duties, the cry is going out for college-trained irrigation and maintenance equipment specialists who can work with today's high-tech watering and turf maintenance equipment.

"I'd kill for a formally trained irrigation technician," said Ray Davies, head superintendent at Merced (Calif.) Golf & Country Club. "Irrigation is critical. When you look at a well-manicured golf course, it

Continued on page 26

RTC's Kiawah auction scheduled for May 19

By PETER BLAIS

CHARLESTON, S.C. — The prestigious Ocean Course at Kiawah Island is scheduled to go back on the auction block May 19.

A dozen parties interested in becoming the new owners of the Pete Dye-designed layout and site of the 1991 Ryder Cup attended a bidder's conference here in early April. Among the potential bidders were course owners, management companies, local golf industry veterans and individuals with no ties to the golf business.

"Those who haven't been in the golf business before may see this as a chance to get into the industry in a big way," said Tom Harris, senior vice president of golf properties with CB Commercial, which is marketing the property through its 150 worldwide offices. "Those who weren't in the business seemed well qualified, financially, to enter it."

Financial capability is one of the requirements the winning bidder must demonstrate before the

Continued on page 57



A PEARL IN THE EAST

Dragon Pearl Golf Club, located outside Bangkok, Thailand, is one of the courses making a name for designer Jim Engh, who cut his teeth with IMG and Cotton Pennink. For more on a member of golf architecture's new breed, see page 45.

Supers turn OSHA regs to their budgetary advantage

By MARK LESLIE

While state and federal legislators struggle with weighing the costs and benefits before passing new laws, golf course superintendents may actually save their clubs money following suggestions from safety experts like Occu-

pational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) personnel.

By investing about \$1,500 a year for four or five years, his former club saved \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year in insurance costs, said Ray Davies, now superintendent at Lake Merced (Calif.) Golf & Country Club.

Referring to his old employer, Virginia Country Club in Huntington Beach, Calif., Davies said: "We didn't have a negative attitude. Just the opposite. From my viewpoint, it saves you money in the long run."

Complying with OSHA standards is "something

Continued on page 30



Mike Robinson

Oregon ryegrass growers organize bargaining group

By HAL PHILLIPS

ALBANY, Ore. — Here in the Willamette Valley, the microeconomics of low carry-over inventory and a 1995 bumper crop have taken a back seat to the macroeconomics of floor prices, overproduction and their affects on the old standby, supply and demand. The result will likely be higher ryegrass prices this fall — maybe as much as 10 cents per pound, according to industry experts.

One reason? Seed growers here have organized the Perennial Ryegrass Bargaining Association (PRBA), which instituted a minimum price of 45 cents a pound in response to the gradual decline in perennial ryegrass prices. The PRBA has reserved the right to raise or lower that figure come August.

Seed dealers, those firms that market seed to golf course superintendents, view this development with mixed feelings. In time of poor supply, floor prices have little relevance. But in the long term, many

Continued on page 63

Promote With Style P. 58

Davies' testimony: safety measures can transform into savings

Continued from page 1

you are supposed to do — not out of fear, but because it's the right thing to do," said Ron Smith, president of Sports Club Management, Inc. in Braintree, Mass., who consults with businesses on compliance with OSHA and risk-management issues. "Even if OSHA doesn't catch you [in non-compliance], if an employee files a lawsuit, the fact that you're not in compliance can come back to bite you... It only takes one

disgruntled employee."

"OSHA is not out there looking for golf courses, but should they be there investigating a death or injury, or if you get the lucky draw [for an inspection], they can be severe," said Burt McKee, vice president of environmental regulatory services for United Agri-Products in Tampa, Fla.

McKee told of a course where a man had died when the tractor he was operating overturned on him and he

drowned in a pond. "OSHA checked over the entire shop," he said. "They found that the grinders were out of adjustment and fined the course \$1,350 each for the two grinding wheels."

When he was president of the state and Southern California golf course superintendents associations, Davies was involved in government regulations. "The biggest service I thought we could offer our members was to

bring them up to date and help them put programs together to get into compliance," Davies said.

"I always tell [club owners] to plan on a 50- to 100-year mentality. When you look at something — especially concerning safety — there is no reason not to do things with a long-term perspective. Do it right and you don't have to worry about accidents."

Smith said golf courses he has consulted consistently

fail in respiratory protection issues, and in some cases hearing conservation.

Yet, "the majority of violations OSHA writes on golf courses are due to HazCom [hazardous communications] violations," said Scott Bell of Bent Pine Golf Club in Vero Beach, Fla. Bell is president of the Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association which, he said, is drafting "a 15-point plan on how to cover yourself. We hope to have it done in a year."

At Virginia CC, Davies asked workers' compensation insurance carriers who were bidding for the club's business for their suggestions to improve his maintenance complex. Then he carried them out.

"It made our staff really aware of hazards," he said. "We were concerned about it, so they were concerned. When we started, our workers' comp experience rating was at 118, 120 percent (the industry's average for claims being 100 percent). When I left, it was 65 percent. We found that a lot of accidents we'd had in the past were back injuries, so we set up rules to protect them.

Saying the first responsibility of his job is "always the safety of my staff," he said: "Ten years from now people won't remember how good or bad the course was on any day. But if someone was hurt, they will remember that."

Therefore these rules:

- People get hurt when they are tired, so less weight must be lifted at the end of the day than the beginning.
 - Any time employees ask for help, they get it.
 - Don't lift anything you're not comfortable lifting.
 - Nobody can lift anything over 80 pounds without help.
 - Nobody can lift anything over 50 pounds after lunch.
 - Nobody need operate a piece of equipment they don't personally feel is safe in any respect.
 - Hard hats, or bump hats, are always worn.
 - Safety switches are never bypassed.
 - Hearing protection is used.
 - Guards are attached to every piece of equipment.
 - Anybody can flag any machine. "They did it in writing and we had to respond in writing with what we were going to do to fix it. We always documented everything," Davies said.
 - Everyone on staff receives respiratory and pesticide training even if they do not work in those areas — "so they will be comfortable with them."
- "Don't look at the job as

Continued on next page

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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Decibel monitoring can be crucial, especially for mower operators

Hearing conservation is a major issue at golf courses, the prime culprits being triplex mowers, weed-eaters and grinding wheels.

"Typically, the worry is with the guys who are mowing all day long. The newer mowers are real nice, and may be a nonfactor," said Ron Smith, president of Sports Club Management, Inc. in Braintree, Mass. "Some of the older ones are bad, as are most of the triplex mowers. Their noise levels are anywhere from 92 to 97 decibels."

"Once you get to 90 decibels there is a sliding scale of how much you can be exposed without hearing protection," he added. "If you have to speak over normal conversational tones to be heard, you are around 90 decibels. You are allowed to be

at an average of 90 decibels for the whole day. At 95 decibels (that's like a 10-percent increase), for only four hours. At 100 decibels you can only be exposed for two hours."

Florida Golf Course Superintendent Association President Scott Bell said: "We supply all our employees with two types of hearing protection and require that they use at least one of the two."

Smith suggested superintendents run noise tests using noise meters (available for \$60-\$70) and audio-metric badges that absorb noise.

Also, crews should undergo hearing tests once a year. "It's a chronic disability that erodes your hearing capacity over time," he said. Providing protection is a minor cost that can provide big savings later.

SEPARATE PESTICIDES FROM OTHER BUILDINGS

More superintendents are making one improvement: storing the pesticides in a separate structure. The idea, said superintendent Ray Davies, "is, making sure if we did have a fire, the fire department would put it out."

Indeed, Davies found that the best way to get good advice is to ask the regulators to inspect your facility. Firefighters recommended Davies move the petroleum products and pesticides from the shop. It cost about \$4,000."

OSHA's Top 25 general industry violations

Oct. 1, 1993 through Sept. 30, 1994

No.	Subject	Total Violations	Initial Penalty
1.	Written hazard communication program	5,826	\$3,170,303
2.	OSHA 200 log & summary	3,941	1,586,740
3.	Hazard communication-Employee info	3,834	2,427,512
4.	Hazard communication-Labeling	3,367	1,194,210
5.	Posting job safety & health protection poster	2,895	656,205
6.	Access to employee exposure & med. records	2,166	136,205
7.	Lockout/tagout-Energy control program	1,960	1,926,388
8.	Lockout/tagout-Energy control procedures	1,951	2,953,552
9.	Machine guarding-Types of guarding	1,886	2,969,327
10.	Abrasive wheel machinery-Exposure adjustment/safety guards	1,735	878,290
11.	Hazard communication-MSDS	1,626	646,800
12.	First aid-Eye wash/emergency shower facilities	1,583	1,410,260
13.	Lockout/tagout-Training & communication	1,485	8,780,450
14.	Mechanical power transmission-Pulley guarding	1,376	1,123,733
15.	Wiring methods-Flexible cords & cables	1,228	610,493
16.	Machine guarding-Point of operation guarding	1,187	1,973,635
17.	Abrasive wheel machinery-Work rests	1,156	715,655
18.	Guarding floor openings, platforms & runways	1,113	1,520,348
19.	Electric-Guarding of live parts	1,059	1,093,602
20.	Electric-Wiring/conductor protection	1,020	627,905
21.	Personal protective equipment-Provide, use & maintain	1,008	1,444,160
22.	Hazard communication-MSDS maintenance & availability	1,003	488,650
23.	Electric-Wiring methods/identification	994	469,265
24.	Blood-borne pathogens-Exposure control plan	987	795,375
25.	OSH Act-General duty clause (employer must provide a safe workplace for all employees)	981	3,583,852

Source: OSHA Computerized Information System

* — The list of OSHA 1910 general industry citations also contained ten 1926 construction industry violations not included on this chart.

Turn safety into savings

Continued from previous page

iron, but as people," Davies urged his colleagues. "Superintendents will spend hours deciding on a mower, yet will hire people in 10 minutes. The machine might cost \$15,000 or \$20,000 and will last 15 years. You pay the person \$20,000 or \$25,000 a year. That's 10-to-one the person over the machine.

"It's important to take a lot of care in choosing and training people."

When contractors come on Davies' course, they are given a list of various hazards — from bee stings to gopher holes, and foxes and squirrels carrying diseases.

Training is also important, Davies said, suggesting a lot of

videotapes and inviting outside experts to speak.

"Unless you're documenting [training], it does not exist," McKee said. "Using a camera is the best way to document. In addition to having employees sign off that they were given training and had the opportunity to ask questions, take pictures — pictures of people wearing spray protection, wearing safety belts, whatever it is that that person was trained in."

In some areas, you never know when extra training may pay off. One week after his club had 20 employees, including six on the maintenance staff, undergo CPR and first aid training, one of the crew performed the Heimlich Method on a choking friend. "He would have died," Davies said. "Can you put a value on that?"

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