

## Safety incentive programs pay off

By MARK LESLIE

Worker-safety incentive programs are proving effective — and saving six-figure dollars — for golf course builders and developers in what is becoming more of a pro-active issue for the industry.

“Much of it is common sense,” said Corky Buell, operations manager for Landscapes Unlimited. “It’s a lot like the automobile industry installing seatbelts. Now people use them because they see results. It’s the same in construction. People see that safety doesn’t cost. It actually pays. The insurance industry has not only promoted safety but created a large influence on it...”

“Accidents are a real worry for me. They can shut you down,” said Joe Niebur, president of course builder Niebur Golf in Colorado Springs, Colo.

And insurance, he said, “can be a major line item. It is more every day. But there is a point system, and fewer accidents can get you major money back at the end of the year.”

Insurance companies set a builder’s or developer’s rates by its accident history. The average rate is 1.0. A company’s “modification rate” would be higher if its accident history is worse than average, lower if better.

“When you’re talking about premiums in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, it adds up,” said Buell, who has lowered Landscapes’ modification rate to .75. “Say your annual sales volume is \$50 million and you’re paying \$600,000 for insurance, you could realize a huge savings. That money can go directly to the bottom line and make you more competitive when it comes bid time.”

The tale of two incentive programs illustrates how successful they can be — both for a builder, like Landscapes Unlimited, and a developer, in this case Grand Casinos Tunica in



Corky Buell, operations manager and in charge of safety for Landscapes Unlimited, with his assistant, Rachael Archer. They have played a major role in reducing accidents at his firm’s projects.

Tunica County, Mississippi.

Landscapes is building a new golf course for Grand Casino on its property. When it began, said Buell, Grand Casino’s modification rate was 1.4. Its incentive program has been so successful the rate now stands at .8.

“They needed to establish a severe safety program,” Buell said.

That program entailed such things as prizes — from jet skis to a Dodge Ram pickup.

Everyone who logged 1,000 hours of accident-free time qualified for the drawings.

On Grand Casino’s first phase of construction — a \$200

Continued on page 34

## Golf cart paths can be accidents in waiting

By MICHAEL J. HURDZAN

Golf cars and their roadways can be major sources of liability for golf course operators, car manufacturers, golf course designers and maintenance personnel. The legal premise being that golf car users are entitled to a reasonable and prudent degree of safety, and are due fair warning of any foreseeable danger or deficiency.

Failure to properly design, construct and maintain golf cars or roadways could lead to a negligence lawsuit if they contribute to an accident that results in an injury or economic loss. For that reason I do not design golf car roadways and that is clearly stated in my contract, because in the eyes of most courts, I may not be able to establish a suitable professional credential for doing that work. Allow me to explain.

They are not golf carts, they are golf cars and the folks who make them belong to the Golf Car Manufacturers Association. In some states a golf car carries with it the same



Michael Hurdzan

dangerous instrumentality as does an automobile, and if they cross public streets they may be required certain safety devices and/or are individually licensed like an automobile. So they are cars and cars do not run on the paths, they run on roadways and roadway design is usually governed by a set of local regulations for slopes, turn radii, signage and traffic controls. Since I do not have knowledge of those local regulations and I am not trained, experienced or qualified to design roadways, I defer the technical portion of them to a civil engineer who does. This may include recommendations for guardrails, speed bumps, paint markings, sight lines, warning symbols, signage or other appropriate devices.

This may sound a little silly until you are a witness in a court of law involving a golf car or roadway, and you are asked:

1. How many degrees do you have in civil engineering?

Continued on page 42

## Pre-employment screening can prevent accidents from happening

CHICAGO — Worker’s-compensation claims have skyrocketed more than 70 percent in the past two decades in the United States, with more than 70,000 new cases filed each year.

Evidence now shows that paper and pencil pre-employment tests can accurately predict workers’ on-the-job safety behavior, according to Reid Psychological Systems. Reid, which specializes in pre-employment screening and information programs, has developed a test called the Reid Safety Scale which identifies applicants who demonstrate adherence to safety policies and a sense of control in the work environment.

With the rise in worker’s-comp claims and falsification of injuries, employers must be more selective in hiring or face increases in insurance premiums, not to mention thousands of dollars in compensation fees, Reid said.

The company reported that employees who were not recommended on the Reid Safety Scale had a 60-percent greater rate of injuries or accidents on the job than those who were recommended. Poor performers on the Reid Safety Scale missed twice

as many work days per year than those who earned the Recommended evaluation. Careless employees who cause injuries to themselves cost companies millions of dollars each year.

Nearly four times as many employees who were not recommended by the Reid Safety Scale had disciplinary warnings for violating company safety rules and regulations (19.35 vs. 5.26 percent) compared to those who were recommended.

Employees who were not recommended also missed twice as many work days per year compared to those who were recommended on the test (6.38 vs. 3.24 lost days per employee per year).

“In the past decade, the cost of a serious worker’s compensation injury has risen more than 300 percent in lost wages and over 400 percent in medical costs. The costs continue to rise,” said Stephen Coffman, president of Reid Psychological Systems. “Employers can save thousands of dollars each year by making well-researched hiring decisions.”

Continued on page 34

# easy as



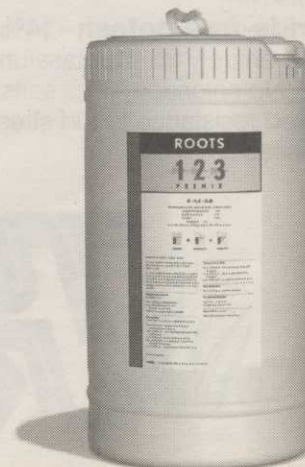
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## Scotts to introduce Kansel preemergent

The Scotts Co. is introducing a new proprietary combination weed control and fertilizer with both Pendimethalin and Ronstar. The company said that its new Kansel+ gives turf managers preemergent control of crabgrass, *Poa annua*, goosegrass, and other annual grassy and broadleaf weeds, plus extended feeding with Scotts' methylene urea fertilizer.

Kansel+ features small-particle technology for consistent, uniform control and feeding. Scotts' methylene urea fertilizer

provides efficient nitrogen delivery for immediate green-up and significantly longer feeding than other dual-preemergent fertilizer products.

Kansel+ can be ordered for the 1998 season. It is also available as part of a Scotts Custom Application Service. Scotts offers a complete line of fertilizer, weed control, and disease control products for the turf market. For more information contact Scotts at 1-800-543-0006.

CIRCLE #204

## Taylor-Dunn adds 1600

Taylor-Dunn Manufacturing Co. has introduced a larger version of its MX-600 Maintenance Expediter that carries two maintenance personnel. Designated the MX-1600, the new Expediter represents an expansion of Taylor-Dunn's line of electric-powered, zero-emission vehicles. For more information contact 310-393-0622.

CIRCLE #205

## Cart-path accidents

Continued from page 31

2. How many scholarly papers or books have you written on the subject?

3. What sort of certification or re-certification training have you had on roadway design?

4. What qualified you to design, build or maintain golf car roadways involved in this accident?

After you answer "none" or "nothing" to those questions, how would you think a judge and/or jury might rule in this case?

But even if the golf car roadway is properly built, there is the question about who decided to place the roadway, why there, and what were those person's qualifications?

For instance, let us suppose someone is riding along on the golf car roadway, obeying all of the rules of the road, and "smash" — they are struck in the face with a golf ball. The question will be if this roadway was prudently planned, safely placed, and adequately protected to have avoided such an accident. Chances are the plaintiff's attorney will find an expert that says it was unsafe, and you or your golf course must defend and convince a court that it was.

I would agree that the golf course architect's knowledge could be more important than a civil engineer in determining where to place the roadways to best service possible play patterns, but will the architect be willing to accept that risk alone?

We at Hurdzan/Fry will work with the engineers to find a suitable roadway location, paying particular attention to sight

Continued on next page

## Cooke & Assoc.

Continued from page 35

housing lots of at least an acre apiece. Annapolis' newcomer status helps explain Cooke's foray into club management.

"The developer is new to the idea of golf — that's part of the reason they wanted me to help in creating the club's philosophy and management," Cooke said. "The only way you can become a member is to build a house in Glen Arbour. But there are decisions to be made regarding tourist play, tournament and how the course will be used by those purchasing homes in the development.

"I'm not worried about the course itself. Considering the power of the land, it will be known as one of the best in Canada."

...

In Bridgewater, an hour south of Halifax, Cooke's Osprey Ridge design is only slightly less spectacular. Huge elevation changes highlight this 6,675-yard layout, built by Atlantic Golf Construction of Fredericton, N.B.

Atlantic finished its work early in 1997, allowing the high-end municipal course to be seeded well in advance of the winter months — good news for Osprey Ridge which, like Glen Arbour, features bentgrass wall to wall.

Two hours north of Halifax, Cooke has broken ground on another high-end course beside the Northumberland Straits, the body of water that separates Nova Scotia from Prince Edward Island.

This exclusive 18-hole private facility is being developed in scenic Fox Harbour by Ron Joyce, founder of the Tim Horton's restaurant chain.

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Continued from previous page

lines and play patterns, but we will not dictate it. Either the engineers or management will have final approval on roadway location.

But all is not gloom and doom, if one recognizes the potential problem and takes adequate precautions. First, golf car roadways should not exceed local engineering and safety standards for automobile roadways, particularly for slopes, sight lines and turning radius.

Second, place the pathways along the right side of a hole if possible, but never in a position that subjects the golf car to a face-on ball strike. Make sure roadways are adequately wide (8' or more is preferred) and/or the edges have either a curb or run-out room.

Provide traffic controls and warnings—you will never be sued for providing too many. Pay particular attention to bridge approaches and steep grades. Make sure roadways are inspected daily for safety, especially after storms. Properly texture roadway surfaces for maximum tire grip.

Provide golf cars that have been certified by the manufacturer as being able to safely negotiate all roadways or expected travel areas. Include all possible safety devices on golf cars to include warning signs, hand holds, windshields, all weather tires, warning signals, etc. Inspect and maintain golf cars daily, keeping records of repairs particularly dealing with tires, brakes, steering and safety devices.

Only rent to drivers with a valid automobile driver's license. Ask if the driver has ever driven a golf car before, and if not give them a safety orientation. Enforce all rules. Discourage alcohol consumption by golf car drivers. Have good insurance and use lots of common sense.

I can't over emphasize the importance of the golf car running surfaces and tires. Old or worn tires may not provide suitable grip for wet surfaces, turf, or fallen leaves.

Again, common sense and vigilance are key, although even then one can not feel too secure. For example, I heard of one case where during a brief rain shower all golfers had left the course and the superintendent closed it while he determined if the course should reopen. His judgment was that the rain was so brief that no damage would be caused by play, so he told the golf pro to open the course.

The golf pro asked, "Can I let out golf cars and do they need to stay on paths?" The superintendent gave the go-ahead and said "paths only" was not necessary. During the following play, a golf car starts down a wet grassy slope, the driver applies the brakes, the wheels lock up and start an out of control slide that finally results in the golf car flipping over and injuring the golfers.

A lawsuit followed and the superintendent became the focus of it simply because he allowed the golf cars to go out on wet turf and did not restrict them to roadways. The case settled out of court but not before a great deal of stress to all parties, especially the superintendent.

Similar horror stories can be told about many other such incidents, even deaths, mainly because people see these conveyances as carts not cars, and treat them like motorized toys not serious power vehicles. Sadly, now they are so woven into the fabric of North American golf that nothing short of a major crises will reduce their use.

GOLF COURSE NEWS

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### WANTED GREENS SUPERINTENDENT

Boonville Country Club in Boonville, IN is seeking a Greens Superintendent. **Forward resume to: Max Nance, Boonville Country Club, P.O. Box 211, Boonville, IN 47601; Phone (812) 897-1370.**

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