

# NEAT AND CLEAN

KEEPING A TIDY AND ORGANIZED MAINTENANCE FACILITY IMPROVES EFFICIENCY

**M**aintenance facilities often are tucked away on a golf property and, for many, are usually out of site and out of mind. Some facilities are nice and tidy; others are slovenly. Maintenance budgets and a primary focus on golf course conditions impact maintenance building conditions. Yet some (perhaps many) golf course superintendents take pride in keeping a neat and clean office, and feel it reflects them and their maintenance operation.

At the private, 36-hole Palmas Del Mar Country Club, which sits on about 250 acres in Humacua, Puerto Rico, the maintenance facility includes a lunch room, locker room, full-size bath, irrigation department area, mechanic's area, the superintendent's office, the assistant's office and the secretary's office.

Maintenance crew members clean and take care of the shop at least three times a week, says golf course superintendent Osvaldo Cruz. The outside of the shop looks better than the inside, Cruz says.

"We planted gardens and pine trees around the facility," he says. "On the interior, we follow all (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) rules with chemical wash areas. We paint and check everything, and pick up trash – sometimes more often, sometimes less often."

Cruz says there are 21 golf course superintendents on the island of Puerto Rico, and they receive a lot of pressure from owners and golfers to keep their golf courses well conditioned, and many times they forget about the maintenance facility.

Additionally, many superintendents might not have the staff or the money to invest as much as they should in their maintenance facility. Cruz, whose staff consists of between 35 and 40 workers including the assistant superintendent, spends about \$2,500 to \$3,000 a year maintaining the maintenance facility at Palmas Del Mar.



BY JOHN WALSH

"If you spend time maintaining it regularly, you spend less every month doing so," he says.

**BIGGER THAN MOST**

At the private 54-hole DuPont Country Club in Wilmington, Del., the maintenance facility is located on the outskirts of one of the courses on the property, which has about 225 maintained acres. The 15-year-old facility, which is a model for others, was built with efficiency in mind, says general superintendent Tristan Engle.

"We're part of DuPont, so it was overengineered," she says. "We can put a fully loaded

stake truck in and raise it all the way up on a 5-ton lift. We have a paint booth that's big enough to fit a car. Most facilities don't have a paint area. We have a fertilizer room separate from the chemical building. There's also a well underneath it. It's all encapsulated."

The maintenance facility also includes 60 lockers, a high school locker room-size shower room and an elevator that goes up to the second floor. It's also big enough to park all the equipment – \$4 million worth of inventory – inside. Engle says the staff takes pride in the fact the facility is top-notch.

"We spruce everything up in the winter, including painting some of the equipment," she says. "Each course is assigned certain parts of the building to clean weekly or bi-weekly. Superintendents and assistants are held accountable for cleanliness. Even the outside has to be maintained. We have to maintain it at all times for safety and to keep our image. We have to keep resources like this polished like our own. It boils down to safety."

Engle, who has been at the corporate club for 12 years, says a clean and organized maintenance facility, in a small way, reflects a golf course's condition.

"With the focus on members and guests, we can't afford time looking for equipment and other items we use to maintain the courses," she says. "We need to find equipment right away. Everything is labeled and hung up properly. It's efficient. We have a five- to seven-minute meeting first thing in the morning, and then we're out on the courses. We don't

want to get out the door wrong in the morning because then we'll need to shift our focus."

**MORE TOGETHER**

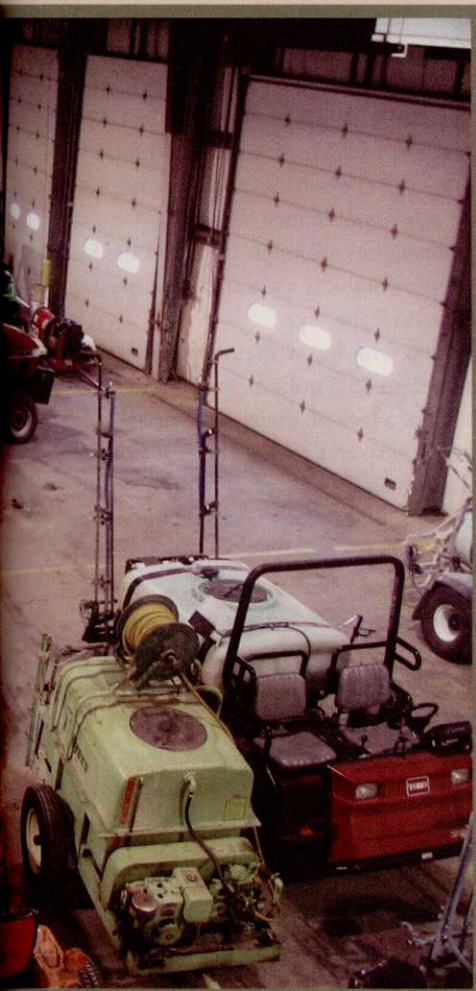
The golf courses at the newly opened 28-hole Kukio Beach Club in Kona, Hawaii, were finished in 2003, and the maintenance building was completed in September 2005. Golf course superintendent Scott Nair's predecessor provided input for the design of the building. Some changes needed to be made, such as adding more Cat 5 cable, tweaking the design of the equipment wash area and additions of air power to multiple locations.

The maintenance facility at Kukio Beach is quite different than most others. About 100 people work out of the maintenance facility, which includes:

- A housekeeping staff that cleans it daily;
- A shop attendant who, among other tasks, cleans the outside of the building, maintains uniform inventory, refills fuel tanks and washes storage areas;
- A 35-person landscape department;
- A lunch room with a kitchen steward; and
- A parking lot for 95 cars.

The maintenance facility footprint is five acres and the actual maintenance building is 12,000 square feet. Nair, who has been at Kukio Beach for two years and has a staff of 45 year-round, says Kukio is changing the concept of the maintenance facility. He says many in the industry look at maintenance as part of the back of the house, and the people who maintain the grounds are separated from other club employees into another facility.

"We have a different approach," he says. "Our building costs are expensive – \$1,000 to \$1,800 a square foot. Accounting, human resources, landscaping, engineering are all in the maintenance facility. This improves efficiency. When I have an accounting problem, I



The maintenance building at the DuPont Country Club, which is bigger than most, was built 15 years ago with efficiency in mind. Photo: DuPont Country Club

Tristan Engle, general superintendent at the DuPont Country Club, says it's up to her and her staff to educate the members about the importance of a safe maintenance facility. Photo: DuPont Country Club



go down the hall. I don't have to make phone calls. This keeps traffic away from the clubhouse and reduces building costs. It keeps all departments close together, and maintenance doesn't have the stigma of being separated. It helps create a more friendly teamwork atmosphere that is vital to the operation."

Nair and his staff keep the maintenance facility clean and organized because they're accountable and are entrusted with an asset, he says.

#### PHILOSOPHY

Cruz, Engle and Nair all share a similar philosophy in that they put significant importance on a neat and clean maintenance facility. Cruz, who's been at Palmas Del Mar for three years, says a maintenance facility has to be clean and organized like the course it's used to maintain. He says the extent of how nice a maintenance facility depends on the budget. He says superintendents need to have the facility presentable while realizing the golf course is more important, but at the same time realizing the maintenance facility is important, too.

"My motto is show that the maintenance facility is being taken care of," he says. "If you

work at a place and the maintenance facility is beautiful, then the staff will want to go out and make the course beautiful. If employees see a beautiful shop, they'll go the extra mile and won't let it run down. You have to have pride. It starts in the shop and is carried out to the course."

Cruz encourages superintendents not to procrastinate when it comes to shop maintenance.

"Have a checklist," he says. "If you see something wrong, don't wait. Get it done within a week. Treat the maintenance facility like a golf course, but not better than the golf course."

Engle, who has a staff of 60 during peak season and 15 in the off season, says organization is important, as well as getting employees the resources they need to do the job efficiently and effectively.

"Assistant superintendents have to be as organized as the laborers," she says. "Each course doesn't have its own equipment. We share. We don't have the luxury of time to look for things. It all boils down to money. We can't afford to pay someone to look for something."

Engle says it's up to her and her staff to

educate the members – there are 2,500 golfing members of DuPont and 13,000 total members – and committees about the importance of a safe maintenance facility.

"Resources are important, and the facility you work out of is a resource that needs to be looked at," she says.

Nair, who has a maintenance budget of more than \$3.5 million, says uncleanliness is a sign of a lack of attention to detail.

"It's very sad to see the level of care of maintenance facilities out there," he says. "Some are very professional. Many are messy. It doesn't take much money to show that you are proud of where you work."

Nair says club members and course owners need to know the people they have entrusted respect their work space, and if members come into the maintenance facility, they should see their asset is being taken care of.

"Clutter creates safety hazards and contributes to laziness and bad attitudes," he says. "If everything is maintained well and respected, workers will do the same. Respect starts at the top. If managers don't respect the space, they are doing a disservice to the people who write the checks." GCI