



Stephen Tucker is the equipment manager at the Ritz-Carlton Members Golf Club in Bradenton, Fla., and past president of the International Golf Course Equipment Managers Association. He can be reached at 941-309-2913 or stephen.tucker@ritzcarlton.com.

PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE PROGRAMS

Preventive maintenance programs have come a long way in the last 10 years.

Think back when records were kept on index cards; now everything is becoming automated and computer driven. No matter which method you employ, having a program in place is more vital now than it has ever been before.

Preventive maintenance programs not only track when maintenance is due, they provide information for equipment purchases, budgets and labor to justify spending. Utilizing programs such as Trims, Toro's My Turf, TurfCentric, Avior or others will help you run annual expenditure reports. These systems allow you to monitor your costs for each piece of equipment and identify when a piece of equipment needs excessive repairs that may outweigh the purchase of a new one.

You also can use these systems to identify previous parts costs. Many times it's easy to glance over price in pursuit of a part, and this feature identifies when part prices fluctuate. The system tracks what you last paid for a part, which provides a reference point that alerts you when you may be paying too much.

Another great feature of preventive maintenance programs is they can monitor labor costs – whether to justify a budget or the need for an assistant technician. You also can monitor your budget in these programs to help you with your monthly planning of maintenance practices. This will ensure that you can properly plan so you do not exceed your budget or that you're aware before it happens. In these economic times being able to plan and be prepared is half the battle.

Some of these systems are tied into dealers and allow you to purchase parts online, which alleviates the long wait times and gives you a method of tracking when your parts were ordered.

There's a big price range for these systems – from free to \$2,500-plus – but you can't put a price on proper management of your facility's fleet. Once you have all the data in front of you, how would you ever be able to properly manage without it?

Select a preventive maintenance system based on the data you want to track and how much work you're willing to do to get it. Some systems have tiers based on the amount of information you wish to record and others have devices that are attached to machines that will send the information from the machine to your computer.

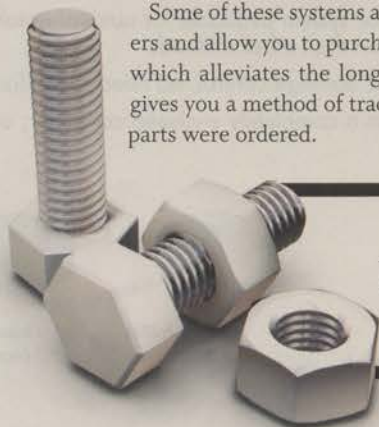
A baseline system would just track your equipment fleet and the preventive maintenance done and not necessarily the actual repairs or parts inventory. The more expensive systems track everything from labor and budgets to parts inventory and create reports for items such as hours' usage, repair costs, labor reports and equipment inventory.

The challenge in implementing a preventive maintenance system is making the time to sit down to do it.

Also, knowing your way around the computer is a huge help and will reduce the time you spend learning the program's basic functions. Basic systems may take only a day to set up, while more detailed systems could take a week of off-and-on work to complete.

Most program manufacturers offer some sort of training. For example, some will come to your work site for a nominal fee while others provide online or telephone training. Most of them have step-by-step instructional videos.

Whether you keep the information on index cards or you utilize one of the systems on the market today, every operation, no matter how big or small, needs some type of system. **GCI**



In these economic times
being able to plan and be prepared
is half the battle.