

by Brian DeVries

Tracking tools

Assistant superintendent Brian DeVries shares a sure-fire way to account for who has done what with which tools.

We've all experienced the end-of-year inventory of our hand tools and asked ourselves the question "Where did they go?" A season in this industry almost seems insurmountable from the perspective of an oft-used hand tool. To help ease the pain and take out some of the perplexity involved with the end of the year order, I am thankful to have been exposed to a hand tool check-out system. When I was an assistant at TPC Summerlin in Las Vegas, one of my responsibilities was to ensure the upkeep and inventory of our hand tools through a simple check-out routine. I know many golf courses around the country use a similar practice for hand tools and other equipment around their facilities, but I want to account my experiences with this type of approach and highlight the benefits of its use.

How does it work?

First, you need to locate an area in your shop where hand tools are easily accessible and hold known locations, i.e. hand saws go on this rack, hammers go on that rack.

Make sure the locations of where tools go are also clearly labeled, maybe even add Spanish to these labels for any Hispanic workers on staff. We even used pictures for some of our larger tools. Next, devise a list of employees and assign them a number. These numbers correlate to tabs with that same number on it that the employee will use when he checks out a hand tool. For larger items like a shovel, rake, or chainsaw, have a check-out sheet, where the employee can sign out and sign in



DeVries

a particular tool. Now the hard part: ensuring that everyone is playing by the rules. When you send the crew out in the morning, make sure you or a key member of the staff is around to see that tabs are used to replace the hand tools, and check out sheets are being used for larger tools. Bottom line, make sure the crew understands the importance of the system, why you use it.

What are the benefits you ask? Well, it's a great way to track the use of hand tools. If the hammer is missing, but the number 13 tag is hanging in its place, we know who to has it. Additionally, if the chainsaw comes back and it's dirty, we can use the check out sheet as a log to look back at the users. Also, it could help keep inventory at satisfactory levels. When the crew knows where a tool came from and where it goes, it is much easier to maintain inventory and keep the shop organized. More importantly, the system as a whole gives the crew some sense of ownership and the need to take more care in the tools they use, for when they check out a tool, their name is attached to that tool, and it becomes their responsibility.

In my experience, I feel this type of system is fairly easy to maintain. The benefits of the numbered tabs speak for themselves and the check out sheet gives you a very useful log for some of the more expensive hand tools. I wanted to share this management tip to illustrate an effective way to help keep inventories at a suitable level. I hope other courses can see the benefits of the use of a check-out system. On a personal note, I have used this technique with great results in a practical setting. In short, it certainly has my stamp of approval, and is a method I will employ as I go forward in my career. **GCI**

Brian DeVries is assistant superintendent at Cascade Hills Country Club in Grand Rapids, Mich., and is a frequent GCI contributor.



To use a tool check-out system, start by keeping hand tools all in one place where missing tools can be noticed at a glance.