



Safety MATTERS

A golf course is no different than any other workplace. Workers must abide by safety procedures, and a safe environment must be provided for golfers.

by Bruce R. Williams, CGCS

Safety at the golf course is often overlooked until accidents or problems arise. Golf course maintenance is a business and safety should be a part of every business. Every golf course budget should have a line item for safety equipment, upgrades to facilities, adherence to laws and regulations and training for staff regarding the need for a safe workplace as well as providing a safe place for golfers to enjoy their recreation.

All too often safety becomes a priority after an accident has happened. At that point it may be a little late to be compliant – sort of like closing the barn door after the horse is

gone. It also becomes a priority when inspectors arrive at your door to follow up on a call from a disgruntled employee.

Every golf course needs written sections on safety in the various documents that guide its operation. This includes standard operating procedures, long-range planning, your orientation and training manual and as a budgetary item.

So, you don't have a safety program? Or, the existing one is weak at best. Where do you start? Either conduct an internal audit of your safety program or hire an outside consultant to do it for you. I have contracted people from insurance companies, consultants who may

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have been former inspectors and also consultants who have these skills as well as are knowledgeable of the laws and have spent quality time on golf courses.

POINTING OUT THE OBVIOUS. It is pretty easy to do a walk-through at a turf-care center and find the obvious potential violations. Here are some common examples:

- Acetylene tanks are not secured to a non-movable object, such as a wall
- Improper spacing for guards on a bench grinder or mower grinders
- Improper ventilation
- Overloaded electrical wall outlets
- Floors littered with clutter
- Incorrect or unmarked walkways
- Inaccurate and out-of-date records, including OSHA 300 forms
- Poor staff safety-training, including topics, signatures and training methods
- Incomplete first-aid kits
- Inaccessible MSDS sheet
- Poorly labeled emergency gasoline shutoff
- Improper pesticide storage that fails to meet state laws
- Disorganized copies of licenses for qualified applicators
- Poorly written safety plan that follows OSHA guidelines
- Lack of or poorly written emergency-response plan
- Lack of safety training for equipment operators
- Non-compliant fuel-can storage
- Rinsate recovery that does not meet state laws
- Emergency exits with improper signage
- No wash-water eye stations and/or showers
- Improper storage of motor oil and lubricants
- Compressed air lines that lack proper shutoffs and connections

While these topics are more concentrated inside the shop there are also a variety of them that have an impact on outside operations as well.

- Chainsaw safety
- First aid
- Defibrillator training
- Emergency evacuation plan
- Safety equipment training

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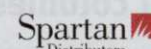


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- Personal protective equipment and the regulations surrounding its use
- Training on what to look for on the golf course to prevent accidents

STEPS TO SAFETY. Over the years I have worked with a variety of clubs and management companies to assist in the formation of viable safety programs. It's hard to believe that some facilities say they cannot afford to have a safety program. My opinion has always been that you can't afford not to have one.

After a facility assesses their shortcomings in the safety arena, the next step is to prioritize the things that need to be done. Take into consideration the amount of time to do all the tasks required, the cost and whether you have

the expertise to do so. There are a variety of templates out there to get started with. Should you encounter an inspection, they will see that you are making an effort to be compliant. This will not get you off the hook, but many inspectors will cite you and then give you a period of time to take the corrective measures necessary to comply.

One of the best investments any golf facility can make is to purchase safety training videos. Many of these videos come in bilingual editions and all training must be in a language that the employee can comprehend.

Jim Becker, of Epic Creative, has several different excellent videos on not only safety, but equipment operation and such. This type of video should be shown annually as well as at the

point of hire during the orientation of new employees. My favorite is "Safety Basics on the Golf Course."

It may not come as a surprise that another company specializes in golf course safety and has consultation as well as safety training videos specific to golf facilities. I have recommended clients to consider using Golf Safety, which is a risk-compliance company. Bill Culbertson and Todd Miller have a very nice product and service, which could help anyone across the country. They have information specific to each state to be sure you are following your local regulations.

While I will not roll out the specifics of each written program, I can surely share what is required in most every state. So if you don't have these in your

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facility, it is likely you will fall short after an accident or an inspection.

- Hazardous Communication Program or HAZCOM
- Respirator Program, including annual testing for tightness on each applicator

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WORKPLACE ISSUES

“One of the best investments that any golf facility can make is to purchase safety training videos.”

- Lock Out/Tag Out Program to identify equipment not to be used while under repair
- Guidelines for dealing with a blood-borne pathogen hazard
- Contingency Plan that includes an emergency plan and spill control
- Personal Protective Equipment Plan should include the training and usage of turf equipment that is required by law for

operators and applicators

- Heat Stress Program that is utilized to prevent heat-related illness

SAFE CONDITIONS. Another area that requires attention is the responsibility of the staff to ensure safe conditions on the golf course. Each and every employee should have the proper training to look for any conditions that could be deemed unsafe on the property. This could include sink holes, low-hanging limbs, uneven steps and any areas that could result in a slip/trip and fall incident. There are certainly many more dangerous situations, and it is incumbent upon staff to report any unsafe conditions to their supervisors.

When an accident happens, employees should follow the procedures outlined in the written documents and also through what they have learned in ongoing monthly train-

10 rules for safe handling chemicals

Business & Legal Resources (BLR), a provider of employment, safety and environmental compliance solutions, lists some key rules for workers who handle dangerous chemicals. You'll undoubtedly have other safety rules to add to the BLR's list. Better yet, present the list in a safety meeting and get employees involved in helping you add to the list. This will create a sense of ownership over your safe chemical handling rules. To employees, they'll be "our" rules rather than "their" rules. That way, people will be more likely to follow them.

RULE #1. Follow all established procedures and perform job duties as you've been trained.

RULE #2. Be cautious and plan ahead. Think about what could go wrong and pay close attention to what you're doing while you work.

Rule #3. Always use required PPE – and inspect it carefully before each use to make sure it's safe to use. Replace worn-out or damaged PPE; it won't provide adequate protection.

RULE #4. Make sure all containers are properly labeled and the material is contained in an appropriate container. Don't use any material not contained or labeled properly. Report any damaged containers or illegible labels to your supervisor right away.

RULE #5.

Read labels and the material safety data sheet (MSDS) before using any material to make sure you understand hazards and precautions.



RULE #6. Use all materials solely for their intended purpose. Don't, for example, use solvents to clean your hands, or gasoline to wipe down equipment.

Rule #7. Never eat or drink while handling any materials, and if your hands are contaminated, don't use cosmetics or handle contact lenses.



RULE #8. Read the labels and refer to MSDSs to identify properties and hazards of chemical products and materials.

RULE #9. Store all materials properly, separate incompatibles and store in ventilated, dry, cool areas.

RULE #10. Keep you and your work area clean. After handling any material, wash thoroughly with soap and water. Clean work surfaces at least once a shift so that contamination risks are minimized.

ing sessions on safety. First responders and others on the scene will need to fill out a written accident report. Such a report will indicate what happened and what the area looked like at the point of their arrival and dealing with the accident. Items in the accident report can and will be used later by either the insurance companies or legal counsel. For this reason alone it is important that the form be filled out accurately and may also include photos or video, accurate date/time and corrective action to prevent future accidents.

Insurance companies and lawyers will ask the typical questions after the accident.

- What happened?
- Did you complete an accident report?
- Did you take corrective measures to ensure this accident won't happen again?
- Was the employee trained properly?
- Is there documentation of training?
- Is training on a monthly basis, and do you have written records confirming attendance?
- Do you have an OSHA log for accidents and lost time from work?

In recent years the various OSHA entities in each state have offered volunteer programs in which a facility can have an inspection without facing fines or penalties as long as any items cited are fixed within about a 30-day period. This is a wonderful program and something worth consideration. However, I would only pursue it after I developed my own audit and remedies in areas where safety is deficient. That way the sticker shock may not be so great.

SAFETY FIRST. Over the years I have encountered more than a few people employed at golf courses who have lost a few fingers or a toe or two. Equipment operation and the use of blades can be a dangerous working environment. While we can't always take the danger away, we can certainly educate our staff on the proper operation of all equipment they will be using.

Each facility should have a checklist that shows what steps were used to train equipment operators. That training should also include reading and understanding the operator manual for any piece of equipment that they may operate. There is a reason each piece of equipment comes with a service manual and also an operator's manual or video that may be bilingual. Have your staff view these materials and sign off on their training to protect the business from liability in the future.

No matter how good your golf course looks, your job may be in jeopardy if you have serious accidents, workers' compensation claims or injured golfers. It is the moral and legal obligation of a facility to provide a safe work environment and also a safe place for golfers to play. Make safety a top priority at your facility. Once you develop the many plans and programs, they are easily transferable to other facilities you may work at in the future.

Update your programs annually to be sure they meet the needs of the facility and also any new regulations that may have developed in the preceding year. Safety is an ongoing issue. Make it a priority at your golf course. The attitude should be "Safety is our No. 1 concern!" **GCI**

Bruce Williams, CGCS, is principal for both Bruce Williams Golf Consulting and Executive Golf Search. He is a frequent GCI contributor.



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