

## Green Stamp of Approval

BY M.A. BAUMANN

**W**hile the International Standards Organization (ISO) 14001 standard isn't

catching on quickly in the United States, some superintendents in Canada have embraced the environmental management system.

So what is the ISO and who is it to set standards for anything? Formed in Amsterdam in 1947, the ISO sets standards for an array of products, services and management operations that contain precise criteria to be used to ensure that materials, products, processes and services are fit for their purpose. There are standardization bodies in 130 countries to help certify companies who adhere to ISO standards.

After consultation with business and environmental groups, it created a new standard called ISO 14001 in 1996. This standard deals with environmental management issues. Sounds like a good green thing, but does it make sense for golf?

Only a handful of clubs in North America (mostly in Canada) are implementing ISO 14001, but that may change as word of the standard spreads. Canadian environmental consultant Craig Camplong says that while there are no governing bodies like the EPA, trade organizations or special interest groups in the United States enforcing ISO certification, he believes the golf sector is ripe for ISO 14001. "It has been slow to catch on around the planet, but it's in the planet's best interest to have international standards," he says.

ISO 14001 provides superintendents with tools to evaluate whether they have a good management system. ISO 14001

provides the following steps to evaluate your environmental program:

- Identify issues that directly affect operations.
- Determine the risk.
- Craft a plan of action to correct risks and deal with issues.
- Evaluate how you have performed.

Courses may likely attain financial benefits after adopting the system, Camplong says.

"It will improve their bottom lines because they'll be more efficient and productive," Camplong adds. "The expense of implementing ISO 14001 is inconsequential compared to the cost of an accident in real dollars, not to mention a potential loss of customers."

Camplong says that while many U.S. courses have environmental programs in place, they are slow to comply with ISO standards. He says the U.S. legal system may hinder implementation.

"The lawyers are probably saying not to implement a system," Camplong says. "It's better not to know you have a problem." Camplong says such thinking is counterproductive for the long-term health of the industry.

Robert Burrows, course manager of Toronto's Rosedale GC, says the system has benefits such as efficient operations to potential reductions in environmental-impairment liability insurance. He and five other course managers in Toronto gathered with Camplong to discuss the implications of ISO 14001. No one came away with a plan to use it in marketing packages.

In places where the environmental movement is strong, however, ISO 14001 could be a godsend.

"In Vermont, we are forced to file a detailed management plan with the state Department of Agriculture for its review



**Robert Burrows, course manager of Rosedale GC in Toronto, has implemented ISO 14001 at his course.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF ROSEDALE GC

and comment," says Ken Lallier, superintendent of The Quechee Club in Quechee, Vt. "We also have to demonstrate how our management programs will not impact the environment." Lallier says standards like ISO 14001 could make that reporting easier.

Camplong says ISO 14001 can prove a sound marketing tool in the future as more people become aware of what it's about.

"It doesn't mean you can't sell it on the pretense that you care about the planet and you're doing something to preserve it," he said. "If you are operating in an area that is environmentally sensitive, you'll get a bang for your buck if you tell them you're ISO 14001." ■

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