

Tips

Pump Station Maintenance

Experts suggest you keep it clean and test its performance to ensure uninterrupted performance during the irrigation season

BY FRANK H. ANDORKA JR.,
Managing Editor

A smooth-running irrigation system is central to keeping turf alive and healthy during the height of the golf season. Consequently, most superintendents do a test run to make sure all the system's heads are working and perform necessary maintenance.

One piece of the irrigation system that often gets overlooked, however, is the pump station. Although it drives everything else, it's usually far down on

the list of tasks superintendents perform during the spring.

But experts say taking care of the pump station is just as important. Here are a few tips on how to get it in shape before the season begins.

Develop a performance baseline

If they haven't done it already, superintendents should run a test early in the season to see how the pump station is functioning, says Brian Vinchesi, president of Irrigation Consulting in Pepperell, Mass. The test should consist of turning on a set number of sprinkler

heads at the same time and measuring the water pressure and the gallons-per-minute rate.

"Once this baseline is established, you can turn on those same sprinklers and compare the numbers to what you saw earlier," Vinchesi says. "If you see a significant drop in either number, it should raise red flags about the overall performance of your pump station."

Michael Krones, president of Hydro Designs, an irrigation consulting firm in Frederick, Md., says superintendents should log these figures so they can make side-by-side comparisons over a period of years.

"Expect a pump station to deteriorate slowly over time, but look for significant decreases from one season to the next,"



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Krones says. "If superintendents suspect problems, they should have service technicians look at the station."

Keep it clean

Krones says good pump station maintenance starts with keeping it clean. Keeping the station clear of dirt and grime will help superintendents spot potential problems earlier, such as wear or rusty casings.

"I always preach the importance of cleanliness," Vinchesi says. "Superintendents should wipe down the station and possibly repaint it. The importance of being able to see the parts you're planning to service shouldn't be underestimated."

Many irrigation systems have screens that should be cleaned and checked every year, Krones says.

He also says the pump station's ventilation system should be checked to

make sure it's free of debris. That can save superintendents headaches by preventing the motor from overheating.

Even pump stations need exercise

Krones says superintendents should exercise the pump station valves to ensure everything is in working order. Opening and closing of the valves keeps scale from forming on the edges and causing problems later in the season.

Krones says the soft parts of all valves, which include items like o-rings and diaphragms, should be checked for cracks or flaws. "You may have to rebuild or replace these parts, but it will help you in the long run."

Check the hardware

As with all equipment, superintendents should check the moving parts of their pump stations to see if they need lubri-

cation, Krones says. "Some pump stations now come with sealed bearings, which don't need additional grease."

Vinchesi says superintendents should also check bolts to see if they're still tight and make sure all electrical connections are still intact.

Superintendents should have turbine pumps pulled once every 10 years by a pump technician to check them closely for wear, he adds. Superintendents using effluent or high pH water should have them checked more often. Centrifugal pumps should be checked after five years, and 10 years thereafter if no problems are found.

So before turning on the irrigation system for the season, take some time to do routine maintenance to the pump station. The time superintendents take now will ensure its proper operation during the height of the irrigation season this year. ■

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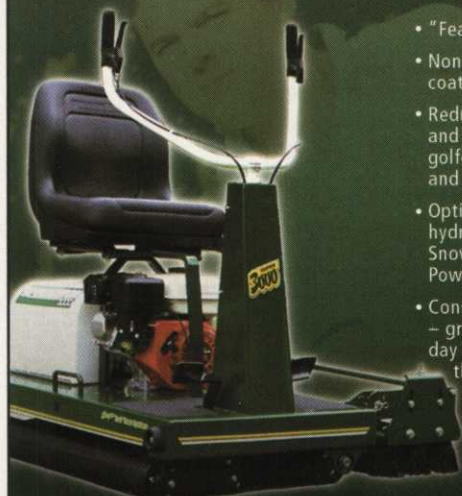


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