

Talk about pressure. At the Ohio Turfgrass Conference & Show last December in Columbus, Kerry Richards was scheduled to speak before Archie Griffin. Yes, the same storied Archie Griffin who won the prestigious Heisman Trophy twice while a football star at The Ohio State University.

To make matters worse for Richards, who holds the humble title of pesticide programs coordinator at Penn State University, the mostly male superintendents in the audience were especially geared up for Griffin's address because their beloved Ohio State Buckeyes were playing the University of Miami for college football's national championship a few weeks later.

"I was stressed about the speech the night before," Richards admitted.

Who wouldn't be? Well, Richards may not have been the most popular speaker that day, but she was the most important. That's because Richards talked about potentially saving lives during her speech, "Pesticide Exposure: Now You See It, Now You Don't."

With spring in the air and summer around the bend, Richards' speech deserves to be revisited. 'Tis the season for pesticide exposure, and much of what Richards said last December should be top of mind for superintendents and their crew members as they go about their business on the greens, tees and fairways of their pest-threatened tracks.

For starters, as Richards pointed out, superintendents and their crews need to take pesticide exposure seriously. And one of the most important things to remember about pesticide exposure is absorption of chemicals in the body, she stressed.

"Different parts of the body absorb pesticides differently," she said. "The head is four times more absorbent than the hands."

Did you know that? Maybe you did but forgot about it. That's why talks like the one Richards gave are essential. Many attendees may have heard the message before, but it's important for them to hear it again so they're reminded of how important it is.

For instance, Richards noted that 97 percent of all pesticide exposures are dermal,

A Vital Speech Worth Revisiting

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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which you probably assumed. But did you know that you should never scrub the exposed area of the skin with a brush to remove the pesticide? If you do, you run the risk of deepening the exposure to more sensitive layers of the skin, Richards says.

You probably know that wearing gloves is the No. 1 way to reduce dermal pesticide exposure. But do you know what kind of gloves to wear?

"The gloves should be unlined because lining absorbs chemicals," Richards says. "They need to be chemically resistant, and they should never be leather or cloth."

Petroleum-based gloves seem like they would be perfectly safe to handle pesticides, but beware of them. "If you get certain types of chemicals on those gloves, they'll make for part of a great Halloween costume because they'll mold right to your fingers," Richards says.

Pesticide exposure also occurs through the nose, mouth and eyes. If one of your crew members accidentally swallows a fungicide, do you know what to do? Should you tell the person to regurgitate the fungicide? Never, Richards warns.

"If it's a strong acid or alkali, it caused a lot of problems on the way down," she says. "If you bring it back up, it's going to do even more damage."

Also, never permit a worker to mix and load chemicals in a closed area, Richards notes. "When you inhale the chemical and it goes to your lungs, the blood capillaries take the chemical right into your body."

No doubt, a lot of Richards' talk had to do with common-sense practices. But a lot of us forget to practice common sense a lot of the time.

Richards' speech was a home run — or in this case, a touchdown.

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